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THOMAS PAINE

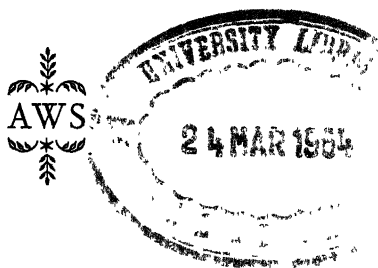
A.T. c. 65

# Thomas Paine

REPRESENTATIVE SELECTIONS, WITH  
INTRODUCTION, BIBLIOGRAPHY, AND NOTES

BY  
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AMERICAN BOOK COMPANY

*New York · Cincinnati · Chicago*

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## *PREFACE*

At a time when the forward-looking peoples of the world are engaged in the mighty task of preserving and enlarging the rights of the Common Man, the ideas of Thomas Paine, the most articulate spokesman of those rights, ought to be better known. Broadly speaking, these ideas are those of The Enlightenment, focused upon contemporary tyrannies, by one who lived in and was devoted to the democratic interests of England, America, and France.

Since Paine's biography has been sympathetically written in much detail, and since some facts regarding his personal life have been used by hostile critics to bring his democratic ideas into discredit, it has seemed best to devote the present Introduction to the development of his ideas—religious, political, economic, humanitarian, educational, and literary, with emphasis on their genetic inter-relationship. It is hoped, however, that those who wish to view him biographically will be assisted by the Chronological Table devoted to his life, by the roughly chronological study of his ideas as they developed, and by the chronological arrangement of the selections. The sources of the texts appear in the notes, which also sketch the circumstances of publication and orient the individual selections in relation to current events. The texts have been slightly modernized in spelling and punctuation, and obvious typographical errors corrected; otherwise they are faithful reproductions of the originals.

Since it was customary, before the rise of Fascism, for those devoted only to American history to represent the Federalists and the Jeffersonians (with whom Paine was associated) as in sharp conflict, it is perhaps well to remind ourselves that they were both loyally American and, like brothers in one family,

differed mainly as to the *extent* to which the people could be trusted to govern themselves and the extent to which the national government should take precedence over the state governments. Toward tyranny, monarchy, the idea of one politically established church, and the kind of ideas now associated with Fascism, they presented a common front. As the Introduction will show, many of the Federalists were friendly with Paine and honored him, especially before 1793; conversely, Paine was proud of having been a pioneer in 1782 in urging that the Articles of Confederation be supplanted by the Constitution, fathered by the Federalists. Individual members of the two parties differed about theological dogma and sectarian preferences; but it should not be forgotten that Paine agreed with the Federalists to the extent of believing in one God as the Creator, in the human soul, in immortality, in the dignity of the human spirit, in the ideal (however they differed as to the means) of trying to promote and safeguard the good of all classes, and in the fact that the final test of true religion consists in *doing* good and in furthering the happiness of mankind.

I am grateful to both the Rockefeller Foundation and the Guggenheim Foundation for fellowships which enabled me to make use of rare materials in widely distant libraries not only in this country but in England and France. And I should like to record my indebtedness to Mr. James O'Donnell, especially for assistance in preparing the manuscript.

H. H. C.

February, 1944

## CONTENTS

### THOMAS PAINE—INTRODUCTION

- I. Religious and Ethical Ideas, xi
  1. The Influence of Quakerism, xii
  2. The Influence of Newtonianism, xv
  3. The Influence of Classical Antiquity, xxvii
  4. The Influence of Early Eastern Religions and Freemasonry, xxix
- II. Political Ideas, xxxiii
  1. Natural Altruism of the People, xxxiv
  2. The Social Compact, xl
  3. Natural *vs.* Civil Rights, xliii
  4. Anti-Traditionalism: Rational Principles and Progress, xlv
  5. Constitutions to Guarantee Representative Government, li
  6. Governmental Regularity to Promote the Good of All, lv
- III. Economics
  1. Basic Factors in Paine's Economic Thought, lviii
  2. Application of Paine's Ideas to Specific Problems, lxxii
- IV. Humanitarianism, lxxxi
  1. A Practical Humanitarian, lxxxii
  2. Social and National Security, lxxxviii
- V. Education, c
- VI. Literary Theory and Practice, cviii

### CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE, cxix

### SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- I. Texts, cxxv

II. Biographies, cxxvii

III. Interpretation and Criticism, cxxxii

SELECTIONS: THE MAJOR PAMPHLETS

*Common Sense*

Introduction, 3

1. On the Origin and Design of Government in General, 4

2. Of Monarchy and Hereditary Succession, 9

3. Thoughts on the Present State of American Affairs, 18

4. Of the Present Ability of America, 35

*The Crisis*

Number I, 45

*The Rights of Man*

Dedication to George Washington, 54

Prefaces

To the French Edition, 54

To the English Edition, 56

Part I

On Burke's *Reflections on the French Revolution*, 59

The Destruction of the Bastille, 71

On the Nature and Origin of Rights, 85

The English and French Constitutions, 92

Steps Leading to the Revolution, 114

The French Declaration of Rights, 131

Observations on the Declaration, 134

Miscellaneous Chapter, 136

Conclusion to Part I, 159

Part II

Dedication to M. de la Fayette, 166

Preface, 167

Introduction, 172

I. Of Society and Civilization, 176

II. Of the Origins of the Present Old Governments, 181

III. Of the Old and New Systems of Government,  
183

IV. Of Constitutions, 197

V. Ways and Means of Improving the Condition of  
Europe, 223

*The Age of Reason*

Part First

Dedication, 234

Credo, 234

Of Missions and Revelations, 236

Concerning the Character of Jesus Christ and His  
History, 239

Of the Bases of Christianity, 241

Examination in Detail of the Preceding Bases, 243

Of the True Theology, 244

Examination of the Old Testament, 245

Of the New Testament, 251

In What the True Revelation Consists, 257

Concerning God, and the Lights Cast on His Existence  
and Attributes by the Bible, 259

Of the Theology of the Christians; and the True  
Theology, 262

The Effects of Christianity on Education, 267

Comparison of Christianity with the Religious Ideas  
Inspired by Nature, 273

System of the Universe, 279

Advantages of the Existence of Many Worlds in Each  
Solar System, 282

Application of the Preceding to the System of the  
Christians, 283

Of the Means Employed in All Time, and Almost  
Universally, to Deceive the Peoples, 285

Recapitulation, 292

Autobiographical Interlude, 293

## Part Second

Preface, 295

The Old Testament

The Question of Authenticity, 298

Comments on Specific Books, 304

The New Testament

Epistles of Paul, 318

Conclusion, 323

*Agrarian Justice*

Preface, 336

Argument for Improving the Condition of the Unprop-  
ertied, 337

Means by Which the Fund Is to Be Created, 340

Means for Carrying the Proposed Plan into Execution, 351

## MISCELLANEOUS SELECTIONS

*Public Good*, 354*Letter Addressed to the Addressers*, 367*Letter to George Washington*, 387

## NOTES

*Common Sense*, 409*The Crisis*, 414*The Rights of Man*, 420*The Age of Reason*, 426*Agrarian Justice*, 429*Public Good*, 431*Letter Addressed to the Addressers*, 433*Letter to George Washington*, 434

## THOMAS PAINE

### I. RELIGIOUS AND ETHICAL IDEAS

Broadly speaking, Paine's importance rests on the fact that he was an idealist, a man who envisaged a happier way of life for all men in the future, who thought in the light of first principles such as the equality and sacredness of all souls before God, and who, since he believed that in the past the life of the common people had been miserable, demanded a sharp break with the past, with tradition. During Paine's first years in America, as we shall see, while he was feeling his way along as an apprentice at propaganda, his ideas were not entirely consistent with one another and not without considerable elements of conservatism, as in *Common Sense*. After he went to France, however, and joined the cause of the ideologues, such as Condorcet, who motivated the French Revolution, he spoke consistently as an antitraditionalist who thought society could be reconstructed in the light of principles and ideals, "abstracted from time and usage."

Granting, then, his American apprenticeship, it seems best to begin our consideration of him in the light of his basic, governing religious and ethical ideas. John Adams, as we shall see, testified that Paine had doubts of religious traditionalism in 1776, and Paine himself said in 1791 that "for several years past"<sup>1</sup> he had intended to publish the ideas he advanced in *The Age of Reason*. Therefore it may not actually be such a violation of chronology as it might appear to con-

<sup>1</sup>*The Writings of Thomas Paine*, edited by Moncure D. Conway, IV, 21, preface to *The Age of Reason*. (This is the standard edition of Paine. 4 vols. New York, 1894-1896. Hereafter referred to as *Writings*.)

sider his religious ideals first, especially since they involve at the outset the Quakerism which was his birthright.

### 1. *The Influence of Quakerism*

The development of Paine's religious and ethical ideas can be understood best, perhaps, in relation to four main religious influences: Quakerism, Newtonianism, classicism, and the exotic concepts of the Druids and ancient Persia and Egypt. The earliest and most difficult to analyze in its effect upon him was Quakerism. His best biographer, Moncure Conway, insisted that he was "explicable only by the intensity of his Quakerism . . ."<sup>2</sup> And there can be no serious question that many early and lasting ideas and attitudes were given him by it. Though never a member of any meeting, Paine could have been a "birthright Friend," for, as he wrote, "My father being of the Quaker profession, it was my good fortune to have an exceedingly good moral education, and a tolerable stock of useful learning."<sup>3</sup> One can easily see the influence of his father's religion in the experience which, intense enough at the time to be remembered decades later, must have bent or helped bend Paine's subconscious mind permanently. "I well remember," he says, "when about seven or eight years of age, hearing a sermon read by a relation of mine, who was a great devotee of the church, upon the subject of what is called *Redemption by the death of the Son of God*. After the sermon was ended, I went into the garden, and as I was going down the garden steps (for I perfectly recollect the spot) I revolted at the recollection of what I had heard, and thought to myself that it was making God Almighty act like a passionate man, that killed his son, when he could not revenge himself any other way; and as I was sure a man would be hanged that did such a thing, I could

<sup>2</sup>M. D. Conway, *Life of Paine* (New York, 1892), II, 201.

<sup>3</sup>*Writings*, IV, 62.

not see for what purpose they preached such sermons. This was not one of those kind of thoughts that had any thing in it of childish levity; it was to me a serious reflection, arising from the idea I had that God was too good to do such an action, and also too almighty to be under any necessity of doing it. I believe in the same manner to this moment; and I moreover believe, that any system of religion that has any thing in it that shocks the mind of a child, cannot be a true system.”<sup>4</sup>

Throughout his religious writings he professed deep admiration for the “moral and benign part”<sup>5</sup> of the Quakers’ thought: “I reverence their philanthropy,”<sup>6</sup> he proclaimed. The charity which led them to be pioneers in the abolition of slavery, prison reform, and a dozen other humanitarian enterprises found, of course, its ready response from Paine whose whole life was devoted to reforms for the good of mankind. He cited the Quakers as the sole exception to the general cruelty of Christian sects, and regarded them as “the only sect that has not persecuted . . .”<sup>7</sup> Indeed, it was on the grounds of the reconstruction of society according to principles of good-will and mutual profit that Paine and the Quakers found themselves in complete agreement, and there, in an absolute sense, alone. He had reinforced childhood notions of their doctrines by reading the theologian Barclay<sup>8</sup>; but, after all, the mystical apprehension of truth through the Inner Light and Paine’s insistence that a dry and rigid rationalism alone could be depended on were mutually exclusive. He often claimed that the Quakers were deists if they but knew it.<sup>9</sup> It

<sup>4</sup> *Writings*, IV, 64–65; see also p. 308, where he says that if all the people of the time of the Crucifixion had been Quakers, all would “have been damned because they were too good to commit murder.”

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 65.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 66.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 185.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 123.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 65, 185, *et passim*.

is noteworthy, however, that he never brought them to reciprocate.

Attention must be paid statements like the following from Mr. Conway: "Paine's political principles were evolved out of his early Quakerism. He was potential in George Fox. The belief that every human soul was the child of God, and capable of direct inspiration from the Father of all, without mediator or priestly intervention, or sacramental instrumentality, was fatal to all privilege and rank. The universal Fatherhood implied universal Brotherhood, or human equality."<sup>10</sup> And Conway adds that it was to protect this ideal from "oppression by the majority" that Paine developed his theory of inviolable private rights. Certainly Paine's readiness to flout temporal authorities and outworn traditions in the cause of what he felt to be the right was in the Quaker tradition. His ability to live frugally and sacrifice financially for his causes, and his not too consistent passion for simplicity, probably stemmed from Quakerism.

Of this much we can be sure. Paine did have a Quaker background. He himself affirmed that his belief in a benevolent deity whose most important attribute was loving Fatherhood came to him from it. His passionate humanitarianism; sense of brotherhood with all men, and its corollary, the sense of the equality of all men's rights; readiness to think and move independently; and his willingness to go "all out" for his beliefs could have come from Quakerism. There is every reason to believe, therefore, that he operated throughout life with Quaker attitudes and ideas in the back of his mind. Perhaps it is important to remember that usually they were in the back of his mind and did not emerge in anything like pure form.

It is hardly accurate, then, to say that Paine is "explicable only" in the light of Quakerism despite his reverence for their doctrines in general. His home was not intensely Quakeristic,

<sup>10</sup>*Writings*, II, 262.

since his father had "married out of meeting" and been expelled from the Society.<sup>11</sup> He was never actively affiliated with the Quakers, and he said in 1776, "I profess myself a member" of "the English church."<sup>12</sup> He attacked the Quakers' pacifism,<sup>13</sup> and he was so far from being considered "in his time the greatest exponent"<sup>14</sup> of Quakerism that they, ordinarily the most charitable of sects, refused his dying plea to be buried with their brethren. Certainly Paine's general theology and that of his contemporary, the Quaker saint John Woolman, were in many ways mutually repellent. And on the personal side the mystical Woolman and rationalistic Paine had as little in common intellectually as they did in outward action. Woolman strove for humility, gentle persuasiveness, and freedom from bondage to the flesh. Paine, though capable of generosity and high friendship, was at times outrageously egotistical, bellicose, and subject in his later life to coarseness. Finally, the typically Quaker Woolman, though interested in reforms such as the abolition of slavery, believed the essential achievement of man to be self-conquest, and inner victory over self-indulgence and sin; Paine, the deistic humanitarian, saw man's warfare to be with principalities and institutionalized powers alone in which outward service overcame outward obstacles and would usher in Utopia.<sup>15</sup>

## 2. *The Influence of Newtonianism*

One must look elsewhere for much of the motivation underlying the four major religious premises made by Paine: (a) that

<sup>11</sup>T. C. Rickman, *Life of Thomas Paine* (London, 1814), p. 33.

<sup>12</sup>*Writings*, I, 156.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, I, 121 ff., and 206 ff.

<sup>14</sup>Mary A. Best, *Thomas Paine, Prophet and Martyr of Democracy* (New York, 1927), p. 406.

<sup>15</sup>For further evidence refuting the thesis that Quakerism is the key to Paine, see R. B. Falk's excellent article, "Thomas Paine: Deist or Quaker?" *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, January, 1938.

nature, in the eye of rationalistic science, is a divine revelation; (b) that such science reveals "a harmonious, magnificent order"<sup>16</sup>—that nature is law; (c) that the natural man shares the divine benevolence and that in this harmonious order his "wants, acting upon every individual, impel the whole of them into society, as naturally as gravitation acts to a center"<sup>17</sup>; (d) and that an attempt to re-establish in politics and religion a lost harmony with this uniform, immutable, universal, and eternal law and order, and to modify or overthrow whatever traditional institutions have obscured this order and thrown its natural harmony into discord will constitute progress, will rapidly decrease human misery, and will rapidly usher in "the birthday of a new world." Perhaps his inherited Quaker independence made it easier for him to break with the historical majesty of tradition which inhered in the Christianity of his time and place. But it seems likely that Paine derived these four major premises mainly from popularizations of Newtonian science and deism and from the climate of opinion which rationalism had helped to develop for over a century, and which is roughly denominated "The Enlightenment."<sup>18</sup>

Paine, with his natural bent toward science<sup>19</sup> and ardent self-education,<sup>20</sup> may have read Newton's *Principia* (1687, widely

<sup>16</sup> *Writings*, IV, 340.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 406.

<sup>18</sup> For full orientation consult Preserved Smith, *A History of Modern Culture* (New York, 1934), II, with an elaborate bibliography. Smith places primary emphasis on science and rationalism, and the way they affected attitudes in philosophy, politics, economics, humanitarianism, literature, and religion. See also Carl Becker, *The Declaration of Independence* (New York, 1922) and *The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth-Century Philosophers* (New Haven, 1932); Kingsley Martin, *French Liberal Thought in the Eighteenth Century* (Boston, 1929); G. A. Koch, *Republican Religion; the American Revolution and the Cult of Reason* (New York, 1933); and H. M. Morais, *Deism in Eighteenth-Century America* (New York, 1934).

<sup>19</sup> *Writings*, IV, 63.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 64.

translated after 1729); if he did not read Newton himself, he could hardly have escaped learning the main outlines of his thought from the current popular diffusion of Newtonianism, which was almost literally "in the air."<sup>21</sup> For a man of Paine's delight in social discussion and debate, interested in science, Newtonianism and deism were accessible in scores of places, and especially in the social circles he frequented which gathered around Franklin in America, Godwin in England, and Condorcet in France. Some of the semipopular sources of his first information are known, however. In speaking of the period (1757-1759) when at the age of twenty he lived in London as a staymaker in the employ of Mr. Morris, Paine says, "As soon as I was able, I purchased a pair of globes, and attended the philosophical lectures of Martin and Ferguson, and became . . . acquainted with Dr. Bevis, of the society called the Royal Society, then living in the Temple, and an excellent astronomer."<sup>22</sup>

Let us now return to an exposition of what have been called Paine's four premises. The author of *The Age of Reason*

<sup>21</sup>See Herbert Drennon, "James Thomson and Newtonism," *University of Chicago Abstracts of Theses* (Humanistic Series, 1930), VIII, 524. Paine's American friend, David Rittenhouse, the astronomer, was an ardent Newtonian. In a paper to be published shortly in the *Transactions of the Wisconsin Academy*, I have dealt at considerable length with "The Influence of Science on American Literature, 1775-1800." Voltaire had of course popularized Newtonianism in France. In summing up the work of the French Encyclopedists, John Morley (*Diderot*, London, 1880, p. 4) says, "Broadly stated, the great central moral of it all was this: that human nature is good, that the world is capable of being made a desirable abiding place, and that the evil of the world is the fruit of bad education and bad institutions."

<sup>22</sup>*Writings*, IV, 63, and see Conway's *Life*, I, 15-17. Conway says Paine "continued his studies in Thetford," and speaks of his "scientific books" which he unfortunately does not name. The parallels between Paine's ideas and those in the published lectures by Martin and Ferguson are cited in H. H. Clark's "An Historical Interpretation of Thomas Paine's Religion," *University of California Chronicle*, XXXV, 56-87 (January, 1933).

"honors Reason as the choicest gift of God to man, and the faculty by which he is enabled to contemplate the power, wisdom, and goodness of the Creator displayed in the creation."<sup>23</sup> If he appears to be attacking the Christian religion in the light of reason, it should be borne in mind that this reason was itself associated with religion and the supernatural. Since only "the creation is the Bible of the deist,"<sup>24</sup> "the principles we discover there are eternal and of divine origin,"<sup>25</sup> "for the Creator of man is the creator of science, and it is through that medium that man can see God, as it were, face to face."<sup>26</sup> "That which is now called natural philosophy, embracing the whole circle of science, of which astronomy occupies the chief place, is the study of the works of God, and of the power and Wisdom of God in his works, and is the true theology."<sup>27</sup> To Paine "the Creator of the Universe" is "the Fountain of all Wisdom, the Origin of all Science, the Author of all Knowledge, the God of Order and of Harmony."<sup>28</sup> "When we see a watch, we have as positive proof of the existence of a watch-maker, as if we saw him; and in like manner the creation is evidence to our reason and our senses of the existence of a creator."<sup>29</sup>

At once an empiricist and a supernaturalist, Paine held that "It is comfortable to live under the belief of the existence of an infinite protecting power; and it is an addition to that comfort to know that such a belief is not a mere conceit of the imagination . . .; nor a belief founded only on tradition or received opinion; but a belief deducible by the action of reason upon the things that compose the system of the universe; a belief rising out of visible facts: and so demonstrable . . . that matter and the properties it has will not account for the system

<sup>23</sup> *Writings*, IV, 322. See also IV, 192; 315-16; 334-35.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 189.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 191.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 216.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 191.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 50.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 317.

of the universe, and that there must necessarily be a superior cause."<sup>30</sup> Like the Newtonians, Paine never ceased to "hope for happiness beyond this life"<sup>31</sup>; "the belief of a future state is a *rational belief*, founded on facts visible in the creation: for it is not more difficult to believe that we shall exist hereafter in a better state and form than at present, than that a worm should become a butterfly. . . ."<sup>32</sup>

In conscious revolt against the indoor, book-religion of the "gloomy Calvinists" and "the absurd and impious doctrine of predestination"<sup>33</sup> taught by "these fanatical hypocrites,"<sup>34</sup> his mind finds "a happiness in Deism, when rightly understood, that is not to be found in any other system of religion."<sup>35</sup> "Do we not see a fair creation prepared to receive us the instant we are born—a world furnished to our hands, that cost us nothing? . . . Whether we sleep or wake, the vast machinery of the universe still goes on."<sup>36</sup> "Do we want to contemplate [God's] munificence? We see it in the abundance with which he fills the earth. Do we want to contemplate his mercy? We see it in his not withholding that abundance even from the unthankful."<sup>37</sup> "The moral duty of man consists in imitating the moral goodness and beneficence of God manifested in the creation toward all his creatures."<sup>38</sup>

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 244. In view of the widespread belief that Paine was a "filthy little atheist" (popularized even by so intelligent a man as Theodore Roosevelt in his *Gouverneur Morris*, Boston, 1893, p. 289), it is interesting to notice that Paine insists that materialism alone cannot explain the universe because that does not account for the *motion* imparted to the planets: a God, a "Creator of motion," is necessary (*Writings*, IV, 240-241). As Conway points out (*ibid.*, IV, 238), Paine's discourse on "The Existence of God" is a "digest of Newton's Letters to Bentley, in which he postulates a divine power as necessary to explain planetary motion. . . ."

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 21.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 179. On immortality, see also *ibid.*, IV, 188; 285; 420.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 427, also 324 f., 334 ff., 355, 424 ff.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 324.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 316.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 31.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 46.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 83.

It should be borne in mind that Paine's revolt against the Christian tradition, itself dualistic, was motivated by the perception that the historic relativism of a book-tradition was the prey of time and change; "the continually progressive change to which the meaning of words is subject, the want of an universal language which renders translation necessary, the errors to which translations are again subject, the mistakes of copyists and printers, together with the possibility of wilful alteration, are themselves evidences that human language, whether in speech or in print, cannot be the vehicle of the Word of God," the eternity and universality of which demand "the idea, not only of unchangeableness, but of the utter impossibility of any change."<sup>39</sup> Hence, under the tutelage of the Newtonians, he turned from books to nature, a testimony to all times and nationalities, which, approached reverently with "the divine gift of reason" and the method of science, reveals to him an immaterial Creator whose eternal and universal benevolence are manifest in "invariable principles and unchangeable order."<sup>40</sup>

Now it is of sovereign importance, if we would adequately interpret and judge Paine, that we should interpret his appeal not only to reason but to nature in the light of the contemporary meaning these two focal concepts had in the minds of the teachers who molded his mind in its plastic age. For the Newtonians and Paine mean, when they appeal to nature, vastly more than the original chaos of the pathless wilderness or a supine surrender to the capricious dictates of a savage appetite. *Usually, nature meant to them harmony, law, and order;* and hence an appeal to nature can scarcely be interpreted as an appeal to anarchy. Paine is careful to define what he means by nature: "Man could not invent and make a universe—he could not invent nature, for *nature is of divine origin. It is the laws by which the universe is governed.* When, therefore, we look

<sup>39</sup> *Writings*, IV, 38.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 412.

through nature up to nature's God, we are in the right road of happiness . . ." <sup>41</sup> "As to that which is called *nature*, it is no other than the laws by which motion and action of every kind, with respect to unintelligible matter, is regulated." <sup>42</sup> "When we survey the works of Creation, the revolutions of the planetary system, and the whole economy of what is called *nature*, which is no other than the laws the Creator has prescribed to matter, we see unerring order and universal harmony reigning throughout the whole. . . . Here is the standard to which everything must be brought that pretends to be the work . . . of God." <sup>43</sup> Having interpreted Paine's mind in the light of contemporary philosophic definitions and their relative emphasis given by men whom Paine acknowledged as his teachers, we have now arrived at the very core of his thought, "the standard to which everything must be brought," which is a divinely revealed and sanctioned law and order, in harmonious conformity to which society finds its happiness. Thus Newtonian deism, as interpreted by Paine, involved discipline and order just as did Calvinistic Federalism in America, or Anglican Toryism in England, although the difference in background and terminology has prevented many critics from recognizing it, at least in the case of Paine. Although Paine wrote *The Rights of Man* as a refutation of Burke's *Reflections on the French Revolution*, the ultimate and underlying assumptions of the former are no more an intentional defense of anarchy than those of the

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, IV, 311. Paine remarks of his own discovery of a ratio in financial laws, "I have not made the ratio any more than Newton made the ratio of gravitation," which was of divine origin (*ibid.*, III, 292).

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*, IV, 242 ff. It should be noted that in the light of changeless and inexorable law Paine attacked the idea of prayer as not only futile but "an attempt to make the Almighty change his mind, and act otherwise than he does" (*ibid.*, IV, 44). See also his letter to Samuel Adams, *ibid.*, IV, 202 ff.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, IV, 339. (Italics mine.) The thought here expressed is reiterated, *ibid.*, IV, 46; 340; 366.

latter. For Paine's "standard" was a divinely ordained "harmonious magnificent order."<sup>44</sup>

Since Newtonianism had supplied mathematical proof of a universal, all-embracing, divinely-ordered harmony, a universe throbbing with the rhythm of benevolence, and since the Creator and the creation cannot therefore be at strife, it follows that man, the crown of creation, shares this divine harmony manifesting the "infinite goodness" of the Creator. Newtonianism, by positing a cosmic harmony, furnished, in place of Puritan convictions of man's total depravity, what seemed a mathematical foundation for a faith in the light of nature and in the pregnant theory of natural goodness. Thus Paine wrote, "man, where he is not corrupted by governments, is naturally the friend of man, . . . human nature is not of itself vicious."<sup>45</sup> "The great mass of people are always just,"<sup>46</sup> and "the safest asylum, especially in times of general convulsion when no settled form of government prevails, is *the love of the people*."<sup>47</sup> Hence Paine argued that the representative government must supplant monarchy, for if "the representative sys-

<sup>44</sup> *Writings*, IV, 340.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 453.

<sup>46</sup> Quoted in Conway's *Life*, II, 4.

<sup>47</sup> *Writings*, I, 159. Of course Paine's faith that an altruistic social life is natural may have been conditioned by earlier thinkers than Martin and Ferguson. We have noted his later familiarity with Grotius, who supported the above assumption by summarizing (*De jure belli et pacis*, "Prolegomena") relevant views of ancient and Christian writers. And later references and quotations (*Writings*, IV, 325) suggest his familiarity with Tillotson, who had refuted Hobbes long before Shaftesbury or the followers of Newton, arguing that "men are naturally a-kin and Friends" (*Works of Dr. John Tillotson* [London, 1728], I, 305, March 8, 1688/9), and that "the frame of our Nature disposeth us to it [charitable altruism], and our inclination to society, in which there can be no pleasure, no advantage, without mutual Love and Kindness" (*ibid.*, I, 171, December 3, 1678). Anthony Collins, one of the militant deists, praised Tillotson as one "whom all *English Free Thinkers* own as their Head" (*A Discourse of Free Thinking* [London, 1713], p. 171); and he proceeds to quote Tillotson on the light of nature and the natural-

tem is always parallel with the order and immutable laws of nature and meets the reason of man in every part,"<sup>48</sup> such being "the order of nature, the order of government must . . . follow it."<sup>49</sup> He held that "the sovereign authority in any country is in the power of making laws," that "the government of a free country, properly speaking, is not in the persons, but in the laws,"<sup>50</sup> and that executives "are no other than authorities to superintend the execution of the laws,"<sup>51</sup> which are ultimately to be safeguarded by a constitution sanctioning not only the control of lawless individuals but also of aggressive parties.<sup>52</sup> The popular notion that Paine's naturalism led him to plead for lawlessness would therefore appear to be based upon ludicrous misunderstandings. For the nature he wished to follow was the law and order of the harmonious Newtonian universe which promised a harmony among men whereby they could establish a parallel civil law and order.

This brings us to the last of what I have tried to define as Paine's major premises. Paine's contemporaries noted that in *Common Sense* (1776), *The Crisis*, and other early work, including *The Rights of Man* (1791-1792), if he had occasion to speak of the Christian religion, he did so in decent, if not respectful language; and the intolerant view that "the only religion that has not been invented . . . is pure and simple Deism,"<sup>53</sup>

ness of altruism. And there can be little question, I think, that Paine's faith in this sort of natural goodness was reinforced by heralds of the French Revolution such as Rousseau (see *Writings*, I, 150; II, 334; III, 80-81 and 104), and by American democrats such as Jefferson.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 426.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 416-419.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 428.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 276.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 277.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 190. Since it has now been shown that the vigorous deistic book entitled *Reason the Only Oracle of Man* (Bennington, 1784) was mainly the work not of Ethan Allen but of Dr. Thomas Young of Philadelphia, it is probable that Paine was familiar with its general viewpoint, because Young and Paine were close associates while trying to formulate the constitution of 1776. (See G. P. Anderson, "Who Wrote Ethan Allen's 'Bible'?" *New England Quarterly*, X, 685-696, December, 1937.)

coupled with his astonishing violence in denouncing the Bible and Christianity, appears only in *The Age of Reason* (1793-1795).

It seems probable that he honestly, if illogically, tried for a time to reverence both astronomy and a broad, rational Christianity,<sup>54</sup> especially since in England and America, on account of the elasticity of Protestantism, most deists regarded themselves as still Christians. His liberally religious friends such as Franklin, Jefferson, Barlow, Martin, and Ferguson, and deistic predecessors such as Bolingbroke, Middleton, Pope, and others, maintained a loosely tolerant relationship with the church, setting a precedent the breaking of which required considerable provocation, even in the case of a man such as Paine.

It appears, then, that his *private* religious views became increasingly radical from his twentieth year, and increasingly conditioned other phases of his thought, although he gave *public* expression to his radicalism only as a result, perhaps, of such factors as (a) the danger in France of losing "sight of morality, of humanity, and of the theology that is true" following "the total abolition" of the priesthood<sup>55</sup>; (b) Burke's constant argument that a secular hierarchy is ultimately grounded upon an ecclesiastical and spiritual hierarchy, his defense there-

<sup>54</sup>For Paine's favorable earlier references to Christianity see *Writings*, I, 56-57; 75-79; 92-99; 100; 171; 184; 188; 208; 212; 247; 250; 266. Most of these references are vague and incidental, although certainly tolerant. He speaks of himself, for example, in 1776, as one "who never dishonors religion either by ridiculing or cavilling at any denomination whatsoever" (*ibid.*, I, 121), and in *The Rights of Man*, Part Two, he argued that "the great Father of all is pleased with variety of devotion" and he urged better pay for "the inferior clergy" (*ibid.*, II, 503-504), although it is there, in 1792, that he shows his hostility to "the connection which Mr. Burke recommends, . . . the *Church Established by Law*," the adulterous union of Church and State. J. Auchincloss (*Paine's Confession of the Divinity of the Holy Scriptures: or the Sophistry of the second part of The Age of Reason* [Stockport, 1796, 2nd ed.], pp. 7 ff.) presents a list of quotations from *Common Sense* and *The Age of Reason* which contradict each other regarding the divinity of the scriptures.

<sup>55</sup>*Writings*, IV, 21.

fore of the union of church and state, and his agency in defeating the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts by charging that the Dissenters championed the French Revolution<sup>56</sup>; (c) an economic crisis in England and in the France of 1789 described by Arthur Young, during which the melioration of social suffering was discouraged, as Paine thought, by the royalists' argument that poverty was the divine will<sup>57</sup>; and (d) by contact with brilliant minds such as those of Voltaire,<sup>58</sup> Raynal, Boulanger, and Condorcet, whose social plans demanded the destruction of faith in the Church as the last refuge of obscurantism, persecution, and the divine right of kings. For it was such minds as these in conjunction with the current historical situation which helped to turn Paine's earlier and genially tolerant Newtonianism into channels destructive.

Science, as we have seen, aided by "the divine gift of reason," revealed to Paine a harmonious and universal order, progressive conformity to which constitutes progress. Such was the faith, in conjunction with the concrete example of America,<sup>59</sup> which enabled him to march in the vanguard of that dauntless

<sup>56</sup>On the details regarding this controversy in Parliament and out of it, see W. T. Laprade, "England and the French Revolution, 1789-1797," *Johns Hopkins University Studies in History and Political Science*, Nos. VIII-XII, pp. 22-23 (August-December, 1909).

<sup>57</sup>See W. P. Hall, *British Radicalism, 1791-1797* (New York, 1912), especially the early part on economic distress; and see the attitude toward the poor not only expressed by Burke but by such supporters as Hannah More (*Village Politics*) and Bishop Richard Watson ("The Wisdom and Goodness of God in having made both Rich and Poor").

<sup>58</sup>See H. H. Clark, "Thomas Paine's Relation to Voltaire and Rousseau," in the *Revue Anglo-américaine*, avril et juin, 1932. That Paine's destructive violence may have owed something to the similar spirit of the *Examen critique de la vie . . . de Saint Paul* (1770) by N. A. Boulanger, is suggested by Paine's extensive quotations from this work in *The Age of Reason* (*Writings*, IV, 173). For orientation see F. A. Aulard's *Christianity and the French Revolution*, London, 1927.

<sup>59</sup>*Writings*, I, 15.

band who dedicated themselves to the fair dream of perfectibility.<sup>60</sup> If "the world has walked in darkness for eighteen hundred years, both as to religion and government,"<sup>61</sup> if men are naturally creatures of society, since their benevolent interests "impel the whole of them into society, as naturally as gravitation acts to a center,"<sup>62</sup> if "a great portion of mankind, in what are called civilized countries, are in a state of poverty and wretchedness far below the condition of an Indian, . . . the cause . . . lies not in any natural defect in the principles of civilization, but in preventing those principles having a universal operation."<sup>63</sup>

Even if a modern skeptic should regard religion as the vainest of theorizing about the unknowable, he cannot ignore religion in the case of Paine, for it was the fountainhead of his concrete work; and without understanding his religion one can scarcely understand and interpret correctly practical programs which, as Franklin said, had a "prodigious" effect in the actual, physical world. For Paine was in his mental habits essentially after 1787 an ideologue, especially devoted to methods deductive and *a priori*. He tells us again and again that his concern is with "principles, and not persons," "the principles of universal society,"<sup>64</sup> and his opponent Burke's alarm derived from the fundamentalism of the "religious war" against "an armed doctrine."<sup>65</sup> Once the polar star of Newtonian deism had risen above Paine's mental horizon, he found his way, and henceforth he had but to walk toward the light. For Newtonian science, with its doctrine of the universality of law, had liberated him, as he thought, from the stifling bondage to historic

<sup>60</sup> See J. Delvaille, *L'histoire de l'idée de progrès* (Paris, 1910), p. 52.

<sup>61</sup> *Writings*, IV, 380.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 406.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 454.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 121.

<sup>65</sup> Edmund Burke, *Works*, VIII, 179.

relativism, from nationalism and a concern with local circumstances and temporal peculiarities, under which he thought Burke still labored.

This was the vantage ground from which Paine dauntlessly approached the temporal tribulations of a world where a progressive departure from the "harmonious, magnificent order" of nature and dependence upon the natural benevolence of the people, wherein lies social happiness, had been embalmed by blind "custom and usage."

### 3. *The Influence of Classical Antiquity*

We come now to the third main influence on Paine's religious thought—that of Classical Antiquity. In common with other deists, when pressed by Churchmen with the assertion that men could not lead serene and moral lives without the aid of Christian revelation, Paine naturally retorted with the example of the classical sages, who lived exalted lives before Christ. "Aristotle, Socrates, Plato . . . were truly great or noble." They arrived "at fame by merit and universal consent."<sup>66</sup> He hopes that "what Athens was in miniature (the wonder of the ancient world), America will be in magnitude."<sup>67</sup> However, probably being guided by "the immortal Montesquieu" who praised the ancient republics,<sup>68</sup> Paine says that "Aristides, Epaminondas, Pericles, Scipio, Camillus, and a thousand other Grecian and Roman heroes would never have astonished the world with their names, had they lived under royal governments."<sup>69</sup> They needed republicanism, but they did not need Christianity to be noble. In the second place, he regards Christianity as a debased "steal" from classicism—

<sup>66</sup> *Writings*, III, 269.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 424. For discussion see L. M. Levin, *The Political Doctrine of Montesquieu's "Esprit des Lois": Its Classical Background* (New York, 1936), especially pp. 16-296.

<sup>68</sup> *Writings*, I, 164 f.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 166.

"the Christian Church, sprung out of the tail of heathen mythology." Following Conyers Middleton's *Letter from Rome* (Paine praised him as having courage, honesty, and "a strong original mind"),<sup>70</sup> he argued that "the trinity of gods . . . was no other than a reduction of the former plurality, which was about twenty or thirty thousand. The statue of Mary succeeded the statue of Diana of Ephesus. The deification of heroes changed into the canonization of saints," and so on. "The Christian theory is little else than the idolatry of the ancient mythologists, accommodated to the purposes of power and revenue."<sup>71</sup> And finally, Paine used the classicism of ancients such as Cicero to reinforce his Newtonian concept of immutable and universal natural law, deriving his knowledge through Middleton who wrote a life of Cicero. "In Cicero," Paine says, "we see that vast superiority of mind, that sublimity of right reasoning and justness of ideas, which man acquires, not by studying bibles and testaments, and the theology of schools built thereon, but by studying the creator in the immensity and unchangeable order of his creation, and the immutability of his law. 'There cannot,' says Cicero, 'be one law now, and another hereafter; but the same eternal immutable law comprehends all nations, at all times, under one common master and governor of all—God.'" Because of the disparity of the "laws" in the Old and the New Testaments, Paine concludes that they are "impositions, fables, and forgeries," since contradictions cannot derive from a God whose wisdom is "unchangeable."<sup>72</sup>

<sup>70</sup> *Writings*, IV, 407. Paine shows his knowledge of Middleton's *Letter from Rome* in saying that Middleton "made a journey to Rome, from whence he wrote letters to show that the forms and ceremonies of the Romish Christian church were taken from the degenerate state of the heathen mythology, as it stood in the latter times of the Greeks and Romans."

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 25.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 411.

#### 4. *The Influence of the Early Eastern Religions and Freemasonry*

In addition to Quakerism, Newtonianism and classicism, a fourth general influence bearing on Paine's religious writings is that derived from a sketchy acquaintance with the religions of ancient Egypt, the Druids, and the Persians, especially as they related to Freemasonry. As expressed particularly in his *Origin of Masonry* and *Answer to the Bishop of Llandaff*, these ideas were gathered from second-hand and third-hand sources which intrigued Paine's speculative but unscholarly mind.<sup>73</sup> This rather crude study in comparative religions merely reinforced ideas Paine had adopted much earlier from many other sources. He envisioned a world-wide, pre-Christian natural religion or rough deism, essentially the same in Persians, Druids, and Egyptians, and far superior in truth and purity to the jumbled corruptions of their ideas borrowed by the ancient Hebrews to form the Bible. The origin of Masonry he saw in an underground effort of these original deists to preserve the truth from the persecutions of a dominant Christianity. The purpose of this tenuous learning, however, was to attack the system developed by the church fathers into modern Christianity as a mere literal-minded corruption of Eastern allegories and myths combined with a shrewd plan for exploiting the people. The result of an interest which came late in life and was never thoroughly developed, Paine's knowledge of these esoteric religions was employed as a controversial weapon and cannot be ranked with Quakerism or Newtonianism as a truly formative factor in his personal idealism.

<sup>73</sup>For the exotic religions Paine used: Sir William Jones, *On the Gods of Greece, Italy, and India* (n.p., n.d.) and *Supplemental Volumes to the Works of Sir William Jones containing the Whole of the Asiatick Researches hitherto Unpublished* (London, 1801), bound with Samuel Davis, *On the Astronomical Computations of the Hindus*; and Henry Lord, *Religion of the Persees* (London, 1630).

It was easy for Paine as a Newtonian to sympathize with the ancient sun worshippers. He worshipped God in the eternal and immutable laws which bound the universe to harmony and order. If they, born in a less enlightened age, mistook for the Creator of Order its central fact, the Sun, their error could be understood. The old religions Paine felt to be essentially one: "The religion of the Druids . . . was the same as the religion of the ancient Egyptians. The priests of Egypt were the professors and teachers of science, and were styled priests of Heliopolis, that is, the *City of the Sun*. The Druids in Europe . . . were the same order of men . . . The word Druid signifies a *wise man*. In Persia they were called Magi, which signifies the same thing."<sup>74</sup> This "ancient religion of the Gentiles," moreover, was a deism "which consisted in the adoration of a first cause of the works of the creation, in which the sun was the great visible agent. It appears to have been a religion of gratitude and adoration, and not of prayer and discontented solicitation." Druidism, he insists, "that wise, elegant, philosophical religion, was the faith opposite to the faith of the gloomy Christian church."<sup>75</sup> And the "scientific purity and religious morality" of its rites proved the members "a wise, learned, and moral class of men."<sup>76</sup>

To counteract the reverence felt for the ancient Hebrews as authors of the Bible, Paine made a particular point of comparing them unfavorably with his natural religionists, calling them unscientific and "most ignorant of all the illiterate world,"<sup>77</sup> and sure to corrupt "a religion founded upon astronomy."<sup>78</sup>

The essay on Masonry is a fragment of an intended continuation of *The Age of Reason*. Paine was undoubtedly trying to

<sup>74</sup>*Writings*, IV, 301.

<sup>75</sup>*Ibid.*, IV, 296.

<sup>76</sup>*Ibid.*, IV, 298.

<sup>77</sup>*Ibid.*, IV, 278-9. Needless to say, Paine, the champion of tolerance, was not anti-Semitic toward contemporaries.

<sup>78</sup>*Ibid.*, IV, 299.

enlist the support of this very powerful social movement of his day<sup>79</sup> by showing that its doctrines and his had always been fundamentally the same. He made extensive and ingenious extracts from what sources<sup>80</sup> he could find on the ideas of Masonry to prove that "*Masonry* . . . is derived from the remains of the ancient Druids; who, like the Magi of Persia and the Priests of Heliopolis in Egypt, were Priests of the Sun. They paid worship to this great luminary, as the great visible agent of a great invisible first cause, whom they stiled "Time without Limits." "<sup>81</sup> The reason for Masonic secrecy, he maintained, was that Christianity, as soon as it became dominant, had begun systematic persecutions which made it necessary for Christians who "remained attached to their original religion to meet in secret, and under the strongest injunctions of secrecy. Their safety depended upon it . . . From the remains of the religion of the Druids, thus preserved, arose the institution which, to avoid the name of Druid, took that of Mason, and practiced under this new name the rites and ceremonies of Druids." "<sup>82</sup> His immediate use of the theory was to say: "The Christian religion and Masonry have one and the same common origin: both are derived from the worship of the Sun. The difference between their origin is, that the Christian religion is a parody on the worship of the Sun, in which they put a man whom they call Christ, in the place of the Sun, and pay him the same adoration . . ." "<sup>83</sup>

Thus, in popularizing the exotic researches of pioneer scholars like Sir William Jones and others, Paine was himself something of a pioneer popularizer of the historical study of

<sup>79</sup>See Bernard Fay, *Revolution and Freemasonry, 1680-1800* (Boston, 1935).

<sup>80</sup>Aside from his many Masonic friends, Paine's sources were George Smith, *The Use and Abuse of Masonry*, and an address by Mr. Dodd in dedicating the Freemason's Hall in London.

<sup>81</sup>*Writings*, IV, 293.

<sup>82</sup>*Ibid.*, IV, 303.

<sup>83</sup>*Ibid.*, IV, 293.

comparative religions and of the idea (which is perhaps the essence of deism) of the wisdom of transcending narrow sectarianisms by reducing religion to those broad elemental principles which all nations and creeds have held in common. Such principles, having won the *consensus gentium* in all ages and lands, must represent, Paine thought, the pure gold of religious thought. As he wrote his old friend Samuel Adams, who, political liberal as he was, shrank back from Paine's religious liberalism, "the World has been overrun with fable and creeds of human invention, with sectaries of whole Nations against all other Nations, and sectaries of those sectaries in each of them against each other. Every sectary, except the Quakers, has been a persecutor. Those who fled from persecution persecuted in their turn, and it is this confusion of creeds that has filled the World with persecution and deluged it with blood. Even the depredation on your commerce by the barbarity powers sprang from the Crusades of the church against those powers. It was a war of creed against creed, each boasting of God for its author, and reviling each other with the name of Infidel."<sup>84</sup> He felt it high time to return to the universal and loving principles he believed would derive from a religion in accordance with natural law such as he thought the ancient religions had been.

If Paine did in the heat of conflict appear to attack Christianity as a whole, we should remember that at that time in France he identified it with Catholicism (which was used as a sinister political weapon of oppression and torture). In the light of the new science and the Higher Criticism, he thought he was obliged to attack the Church's obscurantist hostility to the free play of thought. He was also driven to his position by the way in which so-called Christians like Bishop Watson were distorting Christianity to preach resignation to remediable evils and to discourage charity to the poor and op-

<sup>84</sup> *Writings*, IV, 204.

pressed. The exalted and charitable morality he preached, inculcating man's imitation of God's benevolence, was surely based on Christianity, as his best-intentioned opponents agreed. And at the risk of endangering the logic of his position, he is always reverent toward the Founder of Christianity: "The morality that he preached and practiced was of the most benevolent kind," and "it has not been exceeded by any."<sup>85</sup> He is steadfast in his praise of Quakerism, which surely embodies many of the doctrines most respected by modern Christians. And in the light of Unitarianism and modern liberal theology, it appears that Paine was far more of a Christian than he himself believed. In so far as modern Christianity has agreed with St. Paul that the greatest of the triune Christian virtues is charity, has agreed with Christ himself in his saying that inasmuch as you have done it unto the least of one of these you have done it unto me, it would have found support from Paine as a pioneer in what he called "the religion of humanity."

## II. POLITICAL IDEAS

While Paine's political ideas were doubtless influenced by current events, economic conditions, and a wide variety of other things, it is important to remember that to a considerable extent these political ideas were logical deductions from his religious ideas which have just been considered. Indeed, according to his own testimony, for some time *after* having studied astronomy and having come to doubt Christianity, he "had no disposition for what are called politics . . . When, therefore, I turned my thoughts towards matters of government, I had to form a system for myself, that *accorded with* the moral and philosophic principles in which I had been

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 26. The ways in which Paine's religion motivated his humanitarianism will be discussed in section III of this Introduction.

educated.”<sup>86</sup> In the light of this important self-analysis by Paine himself regarding the genesis and logical articulation of his own ideas, the popular notion seems untenable according to which Paine is viewed as an honorable champion of political freedom who in his old age succumbed to religious infidelity which can be ignored or minimized by those who like political but not religious liberalism. This testimony would seem to show that his political theories grew out of his religious theories—his early Quakerism culminating in “scientific” deism—and their moral and philosophic implications. In his maturity he prided himself upon being a thinker, a logician, guided not so much by historical relativism as by logical abstractions, not so much by events inductively interpreted as by natural rights, the “rights of man” which he traced “to the time when man came from the hand of his Maker.”<sup>87</sup>

### 1. *Natural Altruism of the People*

In the preceding section we have seen how, after some doubts in *Common Sense* and *The Crisis*, he came to accept the doctrine that men are naturally altruistic, or that self-interest would harmonize with the social good of all.<sup>88</sup> This doctrine became the fountainhead of his political thought. To Burke’s muddling along by expediency based on random circumstances Paine would oppose a logical system of principles; he opposed Burke mainly, he said, because as the voice of entrenched conservatism the author of the hostile *Reflections on the French Revolution* had “taken up a contemptible opinion of mankind,”<sup>89</sup> and

<sup>86</sup> *Writings*, IV, 62–63.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 303. Once (*ibid.*, II, 362) he did concede the necessity of considering “place and circumstance” in relation to “principles of government,” but his primary emphasis is upon principles. See especially *ibid.*, III, 61; see also II, 333, 359–360, 382, 386.

<sup>88</sup> See *ante*, pp. xxii–xxiii, for full evidence.

<sup>89</sup> *Writings*, II, 417. See *ibid.*, II, 260–262, for Conway’s long list of contrasts between Paine and Burke (which is not always fair to

because he saw the multitude as "swinish." Thus Paine came to champion the dignity and sanctity of human nature. "To argue with a man," says he, "... whose philosophy consists in holding humanity in contempt, is like administering medicine to the dead..."<sup>90</sup> "As far as my experience in public life extends, I have ever observed, that the great mass of the people are invariably just, both in their intentions and in their objects; but the true method of accomplishing an effect does not always show itself in the first instance."<sup>91</sup> "Man, were he not corrupted by governments, is naturally the friend of man, and ... human nature is not of itself vicious."<sup>92</sup>

As an explanation of how Paine came to adopt this faith in natural altruism we should recall his native Quaker faith according to which men are not totally depraved, but have access to the "Inner Light" which is capable of guiding them toward charity to their fellow-men, considered as brothers because they are children of a Heavenly Father. As a disciple of Newton and his more expansive interpreters such as Martin and Ferguson, Paine adopted their view that God revealed himself in a creation which was ordered by a vast hierarchy of immutable laws by which all things are operated in harmony; since men were the crown of creation, they could not be at strife. Associated with this doctrine, was the belief that, natural laws being good, man could promote his happiness and that of his fellows by obeying these laws. Such a belief helps to account for the reconciliation which Paine (like many another eighteenth-century thinker) makes of the apparent opposition between natural altruism and self-interest.<sup>93</sup> As Pope put it, "self-love and social are the same." For natural laws

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the latter), and also the introduction and notes to Burke's *Reflections* by W. A. and C. B. Phillips (Cambridge, 1929).

<sup>90</sup> *Writings*, I, 233.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 122.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 453.

<sup>93</sup> For Paine's uniting an appeal to self-interest with an appeal to natural altruism, see *Writings*, II, 196, 203, 403-409.

stemmed from Divine Goodness, and in obeying them from motives which might at first involve self-interest one automatically and inevitably promoted the best interests of society, Divine Goodness having ordained the laws so obeyed. The teachings of Locke, widely disseminated in the society Paine frequented, reinforced his view that human nature is malleable, the product of environment and education: if these are changed, we can change and perfect human nature. Classicists such as Cicero, interpreted by Conyers Middleton, later reinforced Paine's Newtonian view that a uniformitarian and elemental order of life was originally good, and that evil had come about by redundancies and incrustations (such as corruptions of church and state) fastening themselves on this order, and that men's natural altruism would shine forth once more if these could be eliminated. It is hardly necessary to mention the possibilities Paine had of absorbing a faith in the altruism of the people in his social intercourse with Franklin's circle in America, Godwin's circle in England, and Condorcet's circle in France where the purest and most benevolent doctrines of the French Revolution were constantly discussed. And finally, along with all the theories and abstractions, the supposedly inductive observations of a new frontier, the effects of transplanting men from the corrupt Old World to a New World environment, were not without influence on Paine. He illustrates very early the truth of Professor Frederick Jackson Turner's thesis that the American frontier bred democracy, an indifference to tradition and authority, and a respect for the ability of the common man to govern himself. Paine concluded that the American "scene . . . generates and encourages great ideas." Emigrants, fleeing the governmental persecutions of the old world, dwelt in the new, "not as enemies, but as brothers . . . In such a situation, man becomes what he ought."<sup>94</sup> In view of Paine's constant conviction that only

<sup>94</sup>*Writings*, II, 402.

the principles of the new world can regenerate the old, this ascription of natural altruism to the effect of the frontier, the new environment, is important.

Since it has been customary for so-called eminent critics of Paine—witness Sir Leslie Stephen—to argue that the central “weakness of his political theories is shown in his refusal to allow for the stupidity and wickedness of mankind,”<sup>95</sup> it behooves us to examine with some care the way in which he would put his faith in natural altruism into actual operation in concrete political affairs. In so doing he showed commendable caution, illustrating a point which is all important and which critics of democratic reliance upon universal suffrage usually ignore. Like his friend and idol Jefferson, Paine insisted that in actual politics the people can be depended upon to govern themselves only in so far as they are *educated*, only in so far as their government is directed by representatives who together represent a wide *knowledge* of the needs of all parts of the country and of statesmanship. Responsibility, the degree of a man’s natural altruism, is balanced by the degree to which man is *educated*. Paine does not say that in actual practice every man, woman, and child is completely altruistic and to be entrusted with responsibilities of government. His doctrine boils down, in actual political practice, to this: “There is always a sufficiency [of wisdom] somewhere in the general mass of society for all purposes; but with respect to the parts of society, it is constantly changing place.”<sup>96</sup> The very young and the very old are hardly capable of wise decisions; but by the representative system it is possible for the people as a whole constantly to replenish their Congresses with selected men—

<sup>95</sup> *Fortnightly Review*, LX, 280 (August, 1893).

<sup>96</sup> *Writings*, II, 416. See whole discussion, pp. 413–428, and Edwin Martin’s *Jefferson and the Idea of Progress*, an unpublished doctoral dissertation (University of Wisconsin, 1941). See also V. E. Gibbons, in “Tom Paine and the Idea of Progress,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History*, LXVI, 191–202 (April, 1942).

such as Jefferson's *aristoi*—in the prime of their physical and intellectual life. This can hardly be regarded as a naïve or rash method of procedure, forming as it does the very bulwark of democratic government as opposed to feudalistic monarchy.

A corollary to Paine's belief in the natural dignity of man is that man in a state of nature, while inferior to educated man in a republic, is superior to man under existing monarchies. In Paine's time this belief had evolved into the concept of primitivism.<sup>97</sup> God originally had created man good and benevolent. Hence when the first social state was formed, it partook of this benevolence. In succeeding ages, however, government had gradually gotten out of hand until it had become an instrument of evil. Contemporary governments in Europe with their tyranny and oppression were therefore instruments of evil weighing heavily upon a naturally benevolent people. This concept has several consequences in Paine's thought. First, in order to rid himself of the oppression of government, man must get back to nature. America, he says, "is the only spot in the political world where the principle of universal reformation could begin." The American scene "has something in it which generates and encourages great ideas."

"Lois Whitney (*Primitivism and the Idea of Progress* [Baltimore, 1934], p. 227) concludes that "Paine uses nearly every one of the primitivistic presuppositions as the basis of a prophecy of unlimited progress. His panacea is the characteristic primitivistic one: go back to nature . . ." But let us note the following use of "nature": his chief objection to European governments (except that of France) in his day was that "they are in the same condition as we conceive of savage uncivilized life; they put themselves beyond the law as well of God as of man, and are, with respect to principle and reciprocal conduct, like so many individuals in a state of nature" (*Writings*, II, 454). H. V. S. Ogden concludes that "In any event, Paine's primitivism is not essential to his theory of natural rights," and that his "political theory in Part I [of *Rights of Man*] is essentially that of John Locke, and his use of the state of nature as well as his conception of it differs in no important respect from that of the earlier writer" (in "The Decline of Lockian Political Theory," *American Historical Review*, XLVI, 39 [October, 1940]).

In such a situation man becomes what he ought. He sees his species, not with the inhuman idea of a natural enemy, but as kindred; and the example shows to the artificial world, that man must go back to Nature for information.<sup>98</sup>

Again, he says that the common people out-of-doors often judge of public measures "in a cooler spirit than their representatives act in."<sup>99</sup> The safest asylum "in times of general convulsion when no settled form of government prevails, is, *the love of the people*. All property is safe under their protection."<sup>100</sup> A third consequence is the belief that kings originally gained power by force and plunder. "Could we," he says, "trace Kings to their first rise, we should find the first of them nothing better than the principal ruffian of some restless gang, whose savage manners or pre-eminence in subtility obtained him the title of chief among plunderers . . ."<sup>101</sup> As a result modern governments are based on force rather than principle. At present the law of nations in practice is "just what they can get and keep till it be taken from them . . ."<sup>102</sup> The present English government, he charges, arose out of the brigandage of William the Conqueror, and though many changes have since been made, the country has never yet regenerated itself.<sup>103</sup> As a result the nation is burdened with a hereditary nobility, debauched and degenerate, which "to sober reason . . . [is] nonsense."<sup>104</sup> A fourth consequence is

<sup>98</sup> *Writings*, II, 402.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 149.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 159.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 80. See also *ibid.*, III, 102. Scripture chronology, he says, shows that in the early ages of the world, "there were no kings; the consequence of which was, there were no wars; it is the pride of kings which throws mankind into confusion" (*ibid.*, I, 75). Royalty is condemned both by nature and Scripture (*ibid.*, I, 76).

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 24.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 411-412. See Paine's attack on George III (*ibid.*, I, 150).

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 46. See also III, 102-103.

the belief that the source of evil in the world is bad government. Left to themselves the people would naturally oppose war. France is not the "natural" enemy of England: "The Creator of man did not constitute them the natural enemy of each other."<sup>105</sup> There is in the heart of man "some tender chord tuned by the hand of its Creator, that struggles to emit in the hearing of the soul a note of sorrowing sympathy" which naturally opposes war and other evils.<sup>106</sup> Paine, like Locke, makes here a distinction between government and society. "Society is produced by our wants, and government by our wickedness." "Society in every state is a blessing" while government is at best "a necessary evil."<sup>107</sup> When government degenerates to its present low state, it becomes the source of all evil. "Monarchial sovereignty," says Paine, is "the enemy of mankind, and the source of misery."<sup>108</sup> And Paine concludes that all the great evils—war, poverty, crime, and violence—are the result of bad government.

## 2. *The Social Compact*

From the belief that man in a state of nature is naturally good, Paine came inevitably to adopt the social compact theory of the origin of government.<sup>109</sup> According to this theory it

<sup>105</sup> *Writings*, I, 268.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 194. During the Revolution Paine said, however, that the "peaceable principle of the Quakers" was impractical, that the reign of Satan was not yet ended, and unless the whole world would lay down arms and negotiate, "the matter ends, and I take up my musket and thank heaven he has put it in my power."

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 69. This was his early view in *Common Sense* (1776). Eventually, however, in *Agrarian Justice* (1797), Paine suggests the modern view that government may be a source of benefit.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 387.

<sup>109</sup> Laprade (*England and the French Revolution*, p. 26) says Paine's theories "were based on the doctrine of the social contract that pervaded the political writings of the time." He was familiar with Locke and Rousseau (see *Writings*, I, 4; III, 64, 104).

was believed, in the words of Locke, that in a state of nature "the execution of the law of Nature is . . . put into every man's hands, whereby every one has a right to punish the transgressors of that law to such a degree as may hinder its violation."<sup>110</sup> This, however, would lead to endless confusion and trouble. Therefore men formed a social compact by which they were so united

into one society as to quit every one his executive power of the law of Nature, and to resign it to the public . . . And this puts men out of a state of Nature into that of a commonwealth, by setting up a judge on earth with authority to determine all the controversies and redress the injuries that may happen to any member of the commonwealth . . .<sup>111</sup>

Much in the manner of Locke, Paine visualizes the origin of government. "In order to get a clear and just idea of the design and end of the government, let us suppose a small number of persons, meeting in some sequestered part of the earth, unconnected with the rest; they will then represent the peopling of any country or of the world. In this state of natural liberty, society will be their first thought."<sup>112</sup> Whenever formal government is completely relaxed, he says at another time, so that man is in a state of nature, a "general association takes place and common interest produces common security." Thus, says Paine, a "great part of that order which reigneth among mankind is not the effect of government. It had its origin in the principles of society"<sup>113</sup> and the natural constitution of

<sup>110</sup>Locke, *On Civil Government*, Book II, Chap. II, "Of the State of Nature," section 7.

<sup>111</sup>Locke, *op. cit.*, Chap. VII, "Of Political or Civil Society," section 89. For orientation, see J. W. Gough, *The Social Contract* (Oxford, 1936), especially chap. XIV on America; and J. F. Felton, *The Social Contract and Its Influence on the American Revolution* (New York, 1891).

<sup>112</sup>*Writings*, II, 116.

<sup>113</sup>It should be remembered that by "society" Paine means the natural association of men in a state of nature.

man. It existed prior to government. . . ."<sup>114</sup> Man cannot continue long to live in a state of nature, however. Life becomes too complex; he soon fails to live up to the law of nature; and thus government becomes necessary. When emigrants from Europe first arrived on our shores, he says, necessity forced them into a society "the reciprocal blessings of which would supersede, and render the obligations of law and government unnecessary while they remain perfectly just to each other." As soon as the difficulties are surmounted, however, they will begin to relax their duty, and "this remissness will point out the necessity of establishing some form of government to supply the defect of moral virtue."<sup>115</sup> Observing the formation of government in Pennsylvania and in the United States itself, Paine explains how government by social compact comes about. In both instances, he says,

there was no such thing as the idea of a compact between the people on one side, and the government on the other. The compact was that of the people with each other, to produce and constitute a government. . . .

Government is not a trade which any man, or any body of men, has a right to set up and exercise for his own emolument, but is altogether a trust, in right of those by whom that trust is delegated and by whom it is always resumable. It has of itself no rights; they are altogether duties.<sup>116</sup>

From this Paine concludes that the present governments in Europe are corrupt because they were not formed originally

<sup>114</sup> *Writings*, II, 406.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 70. On the surface Paine's statement that government is necessary because the people are deficient in "moral virtue" seems inconsistent with his belief in the inherent goodness of man. It is, however, an inconsistency inherent in the Enlightenment itself. Cf. Locke's statement, *op. cit.*, Chap. II, "Of the State of Nature," section 6: Man can live in a "state of Nature" only so long as he is governed by the "law of Nature" which is "reason."

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 432.

on the social compact. The obscurity in which their origin is buried "implies the iniquity and disgrace with which they began."<sup>117</sup>

### 3. *Natural vs. Civil Rights*

If the social compact may be taken as one of the ruling political principles of Paine's time, the doctrine of natural rights was certainly the other. According to this doctrine every man is equally endowed at birth by the Creator with certain inherent rights. Since these rights are twinborn with man himself, they cannot be signed away when the individual passes from a "state of nature" into a government based on the social compact. They can be wrested from the individual only by force, and thus a government is good or bad in proportion as it protects or transgresses these rights. Natural rights of a divine origin was a common concept in the Enlightenment.<sup>118</sup> Jefferson had it in mind when he wrote into the Declaration of Independence that all men "are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights" to secure which governments are "instituted." Thus Paine, seeking for the origin of the rights of man, finds that it "is authority against authority all the way, till we come to the divine origin of the rights of man at the creation. Here our inquiries find a resting place, and our reason finds a home."<sup>119</sup> The rights of the people, he says, are absolute and inalienable; the people "have a right to them, and none have a right either to withhold them, or to grant them."<sup>120</sup> Whenever precedents fail, he says, "We must return to the first principles of things for information, and *think*, as if we were the *first men that thought*." We must get back to

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 138, 411.

<sup>118</sup> Undoubtedly Paine was also influenced by the equalitarianism of his Quaker religion; his "individualism is a spiritualistic individualism, founded on a theology," says Halévy (*The Growth of Philosophical Radicalism* [1928], p. 88).

<sup>119</sup> *Writings*, II, 304.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 81; II, 133, 253.

the "first plain path of nature" and find there the natural rights of man.<sup>121</sup>

What then, to Paine, are the natural rights of man? First, men have a natural right to national independence. This right, he says, "is a point which never yet was called in question. It will not even admit of debate. To deny such a right, would be a kind of atheism against nature. . . ." <sup>122</sup> Second, all men have a "natural, perfect right" to personal freedom. It is the natural dictate of the conscience.<sup>123</sup> Third, men have a natural right of franchise. Attaching a property qualification to the right to vote, says Paine, "is too absurd to make any part of a rational argument." When a natural right is dependent upon property, it rests "on the most precarious of all tenures." <sup>124</sup> Fourth, men have a natural right of free discussion. Paine vigorously condemned the Alien and Sedition Laws of the Adams administration<sup>125</sup> because he considered freedom of speech the guardian of all the other rights. When "opinions are free, either in matters of government or religion, truth will finally and powerfully prevail." <sup>126</sup> Fifth, a nation has at

<sup>121</sup> Quoted by Conway, *Life*, I, 75.

<sup>122</sup> *Writings*, I, 202.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 7.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 88.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 414.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 195. In another place (III, 54-55), Paine implies that truth will prevail even though free speech is suppressed. It is important to recognize the emphasis which Paine places upon the fact that, while "civil right grows out of natural right" and man enters society to secure collective protection which he cannot enforce alone, the state "cannot . . . invade the natural [intellectual] rights which are retained in the individual, and in which the power to execute is as perfect as the right itself" (*ibid.*, II, 306-307). The first draft of this definition Gilbert Chinard originally attributed to Jefferson, and used it as the basis for arguing that his definition of liberty was "entirely different from the French conception as found in Rousseau" and that it represents the "key to the whole democratic system of government evolved by Jefferson" which involved an almost unique "combination of liberty and order, individualism and

all times a natural right of revolution. It has "an inherent indefeasible right to abolish any form of government it finds inconvenient, and to establish [in its place one which] accords with its interest, disposition, and happiness."<sup>127</sup>

In Paine the end and function of both the social compact and the natural rights doctrine was to free the individual in order to rescue the reason from the eclipse into which it had passed. Extricate the reason from the beclouding corruptions of civilization and it will once again shine forth in the revelation of truth as when man first came uncorrupted from the hand of the Creator in the early ages of the world.<sup>128</sup> Each man should rely on himself, says Paine, and the "simple voice of nature and reason will say" what is right.<sup>129</sup> To Paine reason, freely employed, is the guide to principles of sound and orderly government. On all subjects of controversy "men have but to think, and they will neither act wrong nor be misled."<sup>130</sup> He praised the Pennsylvania Constitution and the

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discipline" (*Jefferson* [Boston, 1929], pp. 80-85). Later, Conway having printed the document long before in his *Life of Paine* (I, 235-236), Chinard admitted that it "seems to be" by Paine (*Correspondence of Jefferson and Du Pont de Nemours*, p. lxxiii). Doubtless Chinard is right, however, in tracing the basic idea to the Scottish jurist Lord Kames; Paine's familiarity with Kames is established by the fact that excerpts from his work were selected by Paine for publication in *The Pennsylvania Magazine*, January, 1775.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 385. "That which a whole nation chooses to do it has a right to do" (*ibid.*, II, 278). See also II, 267 ff., 397-399, 403, 427-428; III, 414-417.

<sup>128</sup> "The function of the benefactor of mankind," says Professor A. O. Lovejoy, speaking of the eighteenth-century deistic reformer, "was not to proclaim to men truths which they had never known before, but to purge their minds of 'prejudices' and so to fix their attention upon the central, simple truths which they had really always known" ("The Parallel of Deism and Classicism," *Modern Philology*, XXIX, 287).

<sup>129</sup> *Writings*, I, 71. The similarity of this to the Quaker Inner-Light doctrine is obvious.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 399. See also III, 45-46.

Articles of Confederation as products of untrammelled reason and debate, and concluded from this that "when public matters are open to debate, and the public judgment is free, it will not decide wrong, unless it decides too hastily."<sup>131</sup> This conclusion, based as it is on rationalism inspired by the scientific spirit, is a very important basis of Paine's reliance on the people's ability to govern themselves.

#### 4. *Anti-Traditionalism: Rational Principles and Progress*

With the deification of reason Paine, like the French philosophers, repudiates tradition and the lessons of history. On the "pure ground of principle," he says,

"antiquity and precedent cease to be authority, and hoary-headed error loses its effect. The reasonableness and propriety of things must be examined abstractedly from custom and usage; and, in this point of view, the right which grows into practice today is as much right, and as old in principle and theory, as if it had the customary sanction of a thousand ages."<sup>132</sup>

Thus for Paine the Bible becomes a record of wickedness, Greek and Roman history<sup>133</sup> becomes the history of inferior peoples, and English history becomes the record of violence.<sup>134</sup> Paine praises the American Revolution for having swept away the "poison" of traditional institutions. By its means "every corner of the mind is swept of its cobwebs, poison and dust, and made fit for the reception of generous happiness."<sup>135</sup>

<sup>131</sup> *Writings*, II, 435.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 61.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 252-253. The only ancient book, says Paine, which challenges universal consent and belief is *Euclid's Elements of Geometry*. The "reason is, because it is a book of self-evident demonstration, entirely independent of its author and of everything relating to time, place, and circumstance." See note 401, following.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 80-82.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 105-106.

Paine insisted that revolutions could be accomplished with little violence, provided they were based not upon men but upon principles. For the latter, properly disseminated, would appeal, he thought, to the innate rationality and altruism of everyone and thus opposition would be eliminated. He contended that a counter-revolution in France was impossible because, aided by philosophers, the mind of the people had previously discovered the truths or principles which caused the Revolution itself, and it was "impossible to put the mind back to the same condition it was in before."<sup>136</sup> Paine was uncompromising in his loyalty to principles. When the English government offered to pay £1000 for *The Rights of Man* in order to suppress it, Paine refused, saying that he could not "treat as a mere matter of traffic, that which I intended should operate as a principle."<sup>137</sup> "In taking up any public matter," he said, "I have never made it a consideration . . . whether it be popular or unpopular; but whether it be *right* or *wrong*. The right will always become the popular, if it has courage to show itself, and the shortest way is always a straight line."<sup>138</sup> He insisted that a great

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 360.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 522. Paine insists again and again on his own disinterestedness. Thus he wrote to Danton (*ibid.*, III, 138), "I have no personal interest in any of these matters, nor in any party disputes. I attend only to general principles." He insisted that he did not write *The Crisis* from his personal interest in America; "my principle is universal. My attachment is to all the world, and not to any particular part . . ." (quoted by Best, *op. cit.*, p. 177). So also he contended (*Writings*, II, 454) that in *The Rights of Man* he "endeavored to establish a system of principles as a basis on which government ought to be erected . . ." Paine's claim to impartiality is given some degree of credence by the fact that on July 4, 1792, he gave the radical "Society for Constitutional Information" £1000 and the right to publish his writings to enable them to spread the principles of the Revolution and the new government theories.

<sup>138</sup> *Writings*, III, 400. In the Preface to *The Rights of Man*, Part II, (*ibid.*, II, 394) he speaks of "Mr. Burke's outrageous opposition." "He attacked principles which he knew (from information) I would contest with him, because they are principles I believe to be

chasm separated revolutionary sentiment and mob violence.<sup>139</sup> He repudiated those who by "wilful misrepresentations" promoted violence and thus lost "the great cause of public good in the outrages of a misinformed mob." The true way of change is by revolutionary sentiment which takes its "ground on principles that require no such riotous aid."<sup>140</sup>

By Paine's standards all good government must rest on "a strict adherence to principle."<sup>141</sup> "Government is nothing more than a national association acting on the principles of society."<sup>142</sup> These universal principles are to be read in the "windings and caverns of the human heart."<sup>143</sup> But since the individual reason receives its knowledge from God Himself at the creation, therefore wherever *principle* is concerned "man . . . is everywhere the same, drawn toward his fellow men."<sup>144</sup> And the true idea of a great nation therefore "is that which extends and promotes the principles of universal society," and "whose mind rises above the atmosphere of local thoughts, and considers mankind . . . as the work of one Creator."<sup>145</sup> When bad governments fail, then it indicates that there has been a failure of principle, not of men. And therefore "instead of seeking to reform the individual, the wisdom of a Nation should apply itself to reform the system."<sup>146</sup> In the same way Paine says the question in elections "is not properly a question upon Persons, but upon principles. . . . When moral . . . principles, rather than Persons, are candidates for Power, to vote is to perform a moral duty."<sup>147</sup> Similarly Paine finds the

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good, and which I have contributed to establish, and conceive myself bound to defend." In the same connection he says: "Principles must stand on their own merits, and if they are good they certainly will."

<sup>139</sup> *Writings*, II, 294-296.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 89.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 198.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 121.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 429.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 256.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 410-411.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 392.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 388.

"confusion and contradiction" in Burke's *Reflections* attributable to his failure to steer his course by "some polar truth or principle."<sup>148</sup>

This adherence to principle underlies Paine's thought when he comes to compare and contrast the governments of America, France, and England. Paine insists over and over that the American Revolution was not a local affair, "but universal, and through which the principles of all lovers of mankind are affected."<sup>149</sup> He doggedly maintained that the cause of the fight between the Colonies and England was not only economic but one of principle.<sup>150</sup> The "rapid progress which America makes in every species of improvement" is due to the fact that our government began "on a principle."<sup>151</sup> He attacked the Federalists because they put men above principles.<sup>152</sup> Their policy has "no consistency of parts; and want of consistency is the natural consequence of want of principle."<sup>153</sup> The new French government, like the American, was also based on principles. Paine claimed that Burke did not understand the French Revolution.

It has apparently burst forth . . . from chaos, but it is no more than the consequence of a mental revolution priorly existing in France. The mind of the Nation had changed beforehand,

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 357.

<sup>149</sup> W. M. Van der Weyde, *Life and Works of Paine* (10 vols. New York, 1925), II, 95.

<sup>150</sup> Best, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

<sup>151</sup> *Writings*, II, 402. In America, he says (*ibid.*, I, 99), "law is King," but in Europe "the King is law."

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 429.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 409. Paine demonstrates how, because he acts from principle and not from party, he may find himself on the side of the Federalists on some points. If "by *Federalist* is to be understood one who was for cementing the Union by a general government operating equally over all the States . . ., I ought to stand first on the list of *Federalists*, for the proposition for establishing a general government over the Union, came originally from me in 1783 . . ." (*ibid.*, III, 386).

and the new order of things has naturally followed the new order of thoughts.<sup>154</sup>

Again Paine finds the same distinction between men and principles. Other revolutions in Europe have been the result of personal hatred. But in France the Revolution was "generated in the rational contemplation of the Rights of Man," and distinguished "from the beginning between persons and principles."<sup>155</sup> Thus in the case of Charles I and James II in England "the revolt was against the personal despotism of the men; whereas in France, it was against the hereditary despotism of the established Government."<sup>156</sup> The Revolution failed, however, as soon as it ceased to follow principles. Had it "been conducted consistently with its principles," he says, "there was once a good prospect of extending liberty through the greatest part of Europe." But Paine adds that he "now relinquishes that hope."<sup>157</sup> In contrast to America and France the government of England, says Paine, is not based on principles. It is government by "jobbers."<sup>158</sup> Parliamentary changes in England are meaningless and exhibit a nation under the government of temper, instead of a fixed and steady principle.<sup>159</sup> Pitt's early promise and failure, says Paine, shows that a "change of ministers amounts to nothing. . . . The defect lies in the system."<sup>160</sup> And without supplanting the existing frame of government no reform is possible because of the self-interest of both parties to maintain the *status quo*.<sup>161</sup>

<sup>154</sup> *Writings*, II, 333. Burke does not see, Paine claimed (*ibid.*, II, 283-287), "that principles, and not persons, were the meditated objects of destruction" in the revolution. Thus it "was not against Louis the XVIth, but against the despotic principles of the Government, that the nation revolted."

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 286.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 133.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 409-411.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 50 ff.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 284.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 479.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 506.

### 5. *Constitutions to Guarantee Representative Government*

To guarantee their continuance Paine believed that the principles of sound government must be embodied in a written constitution. The main trouble with the English government is that it has no constitution. "A constitution is a thing antecedent to a Government; it is the act of a people creating a Government and giving it powers, and defining the limits and exercise of the powers so given . . ."<sup>162</sup> Thus the "constitution is the property of a nation, and not of those who exercise the government." Paine insists therefore that a constitution rationally formulated and agreed upon is the only basis of government.<sup>163</sup> He attributed the violence in France to the absence of a sound constitution.

For it is the nature of a constitution to *prevent governing by party*, by establishing a common principle that shall limit and control the power and impulse of party and that says to all parties, *thus far shalt thou go and no further*. But in the absence of a constitution men look entirely to party; and instead of principle governing party, party governs principle.<sup>164</sup>

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 63.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 435. Paine had considerable to do with the formation of constitutional government in America. He helped to formulate the liberal Pennsylvania constitution. See J. P. Selsam, *The Pennsylvania Constitution of 1776* (Philadelphia, 1936). On Paine's activities in favor of the formation of the Union prior to 1787, see H. H. Clark's introduction to *Six New Letters of Thomas Paine* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1939). Conway (*Life*, I, 224) says that Paine was not chosen to the Constitutional Convention because the Federalists feared his enthusiasm. He was always outspoken in his praise of the Constitution and the Union. "I feel myself hurt," he said, "when I hear the Union, that great Palladium of our liberty and safety, the least irreverently spoken of. It is the most sacred thing in the Constitution of America" (quoted by Best, *op. cit.*, p. 221). He claimed that the "proposition" of "consolidating the states into a Federal Government" by means of a constitution came originally from him in 1782 (*Writings*, III, 214).

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 277.

The English Constitution is bad for at least "ninety-nine parts of the nation out of an hundred." It entails upon the nation the unnecessary expense of supporting three forms and systems of Government at once, namely, the monarchical, the aristocratical, and the democratical." In the second place, "it is impossible to unite such a discordant composition by any other means than perpetual corruption"; therefore the corruption "is no other than the natural consequence of such an unnatural compound of governments."<sup>165</sup> The truth probably is, thinks Paine, that no constitution exists. He challenged Burke to produce the English Constitution, and concluded "that though it has been so much talked about, no such thing as a constitution exists, and consequently . . . the people have yet a constitution to form."<sup>166</sup>

Paine believed that the representative principle was the only sure safeguard of the principles embodied in the constitution. He proceeded throughout his works to analyze the advantages of the representative principle in great detail. In representative government "no office of very extraordinary power, or extravagant pay, is attached to any individual; and consequently there is nothing to excite . . . national contentions and civil wars." . . .<sup>167</sup> The representative government is "always in maturity; whereas monarchical government fluctuates through all stages, from non-age to dotage."<sup>168</sup> The representative system "admits of none but men properly qualified into the Government, or removes them if they prove otherwise. Whereas, in the hereditary system, a nation may be encumbered with a knave or an idiot for a whole lifetime . . ."<sup>169</sup>

Moreover, the representative principle is merely a return to the order of nature.<sup>170</sup> Therefore if representative government was established in Europe, nations would "become acquainted, and the animosities and prejudices fomented by the

<sup>165</sup> *Writings*, III, 60.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 310.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 69.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 68-69.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 68 f.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 91.

intrigue and artifice of courts, will cease."<sup>171</sup> At the same time it would prevent civil war within a nation. "Had America been cursed with John Adams's *hereditary Monarchy*, or Alexander Hamilton's *Senate for life*, she must have sought, in the doubtful contest of civil war, what she now obtains by the expression of public will."<sup>172</sup> The principle of representation has still other advantages. It is "the strongest and most powerful center that can be devised for a nation."<sup>173</sup> It "diffuses such a body of knowledge throughout a nation, on the subject of government, as to explode ignorance and preclude imposition."<sup>174</sup> Finally the representative principle is the means of its own reform because "any error in the first essay could be reformed by the same quiet and *rational* process by which the Constitution was formed."<sup>175</sup>

Paine's conception of the representative principle is a very democratic one. The representatives themselves possess no power not delegated to them by the people in a constitution or "original compact which they have made with each other." Therefore the "power of representatives is in many cases less but never can be greater than that of the people represented."<sup>176</sup> Though the power of the legislative body is always inferior to that of the people, yet it is to Paine superior to the executive and judicial branches of the government. The executive department must be "subordinate to the legislative as the body to the mind in a state of health; for it is impossible to conceive

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 512.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 392.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 427.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 388. Italics are mine. See also *ibid.*, II, 244. Like Jefferson, Paine believed that the earth and its government belong to the living and not to the dead. He thought that each generation should have an opportunity to reaffirm or abolish the individual laws by which it was governed. He even suggested that no one law should continue without reaffirmation beyond thirty years (*ibid.*, II, 165); later he suggested twenty-one years (*ibid.*, III, 93).

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 139.

the idea of two sovereignties, a sovereignty to *will* and a sovereignty to *act*." The executive has no discretionary power, "for it can *act no other thing* than what the laws decree."<sup>177</sup> So also is the judiciary subordinate to the legislative. Paine attacks dependence merely on precedents. Every man "ought to be tried by the laws of his own country . . . and not by opinions and authorities from other countries."<sup>178</sup> If the people of the United States through their representatives, says Paine, have no power over the judiciary, the judiciary may become domineering or even dangerous.<sup>179</sup>

Paine's emphasis on the importance of the representative principle led him to attack the English rotten borough system.<sup>180</sup> It is no ill-grounded estimation to say, he says, "that as not one person in seven is represented [in Parliament], at least fourteen millions of taxes out of the seventeen millions, are paid by the unrepresented part."<sup>181</sup> The reform, however, "cannot be trusted to Parliament, but must be undertaken by a distinct body of men separated from every suspicion of corruption or influence." Paine therefore advocates "electing a National Convention. By this method . . . the general Will . . . will be known, and it cannot be known by other means."<sup>182</sup>

A National Convention thus formed, would bring together the sense and opinions of every part of the nation, fairly taken.

<sup>177</sup> *Writings*, III, 275.

<sup>178</sup> Van der Weyde, *Life and Works of Paine*, X, 266-267.

<sup>179</sup> See *Writings*, IV, 459-464.

<sup>180</sup> "In 1793," writes W. P. Hall (*op. cit.*, p. 35), "two hundred and ninety-four members of Parliament—a majority—were returned by constituencies, the greater part of which had less than a hundred voters; none had more than two hundred and fifty. At the most, less than fifteen hundred electors returned a majority of the House." He quotes another authority (E. Porrit, *The Unreformed House of Commons* [Cambridge, 1903], I, 311) to the effect that "from 1760 to 1832 nearly one-half of the members of the House of Commons owed their seats to patrons."

<sup>181</sup> *Writings*, III, 81.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 87.

The science of Government, and the interest of the Public, and of the several parts thereof, would then undergo an ample and rational discussion, freed from the language of parliamentary disguise.<sup>183</sup>

### 6. *Governmental Regularity to Promote the Good of All*

Out of Paine's discussions emerges his ideal government which functions for the general good with the smoothness and economy of a machine. This ideal arises directly out of Paine's religious and humanitarian thought. When Paine took the Enlightened view of mankind and the world, the individual man acquired in his eyes a dignity he had not possessed before. This is the basis of his humanitarian thought. "I have no interest," he wrote, "distinct from that which has a tendency to meliorate the situation of mankind."<sup>184</sup> He attacks Burke for indifference to the "wretched."<sup>185</sup> In contrast Paine maintains that "the moral duty of man consists in imitating the moral goodness and beneficence of God manifested in the creation toward all his creatures." This "goodness of God to man" calls "upon all men to practise the same toward each other."<sup>186</sup> But the "great mass of the poor in all countries are become an hereditary race, and it is next to impossible for them to get out of that state by themselves."<sup>187</sup> The great need then is the reform of government. Self-interest alone is enough to dictate

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 91. It should be noted that it was this demand, elaborated in Paine's *Address to the Addressers*, that England should follow France and change her basic frame of government by calling a national convention of the populace, which alienated many of his former friends among the moderate reformers who only sought minor changes such as annual parliaments.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 284.

<sup>185</sup> Burke's *Reflections* has not "one glance of compassion, not one commiserating reflection" for the unfortunate.

<sup>186</sup> *Writings*, IV, 83.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 339.

reform, according to Paine. Public good is not "opposed to the good of individuals; on the contrary, it is the good of every individual collected."<sup>188</sup> Man's social nature itself adapts him for the perfect government. It is "capable of performing within itself almost everything necessary to its protection and government."<sup>189</sup> "The instant government is abolished, society begins to act: a general association takes place, and common interest produces common security."<sup>190</sup> Under good government, Paine insisted, reform takes place naturally, without effort, and corruption will not accumulate to degrade the poor. "When the general principles of a constitution are sound, the minor reforms which experience may demand are so easy to bring about that the nation will never be tempted to let abuses accumulate."<sup>191</sup> The ideal government, he says, is analogous to "the unerring regularity of the visible solar system."<sup>192</sup>

The influence of Newton undoubtedly played a large part in Paine's formulation of his ideal machinelike government. "It is only by organizing civilization upon such principles as to act like a system of pulleys that the whole weight of misery can be removed."<sup>193</sup> Paine says that he took this idea of a machinelike government "from a principle in nature which no art can overturn, viz. that the more simple any thing is, the less liable it is to be disordered and the easier repaired when disordered."<sup>194</sup> This desire for simplicity in government naturally leads Paine to assert that since security is "the true design and end of government" the most economical government, the one "with the least expense and greatest benefit is preferable to all others."<sup>195</sup> It is partly due to this same desire for a smooth-working, simple government that he prefers the more simple and machinelike

<sup>188</sup> *Writings*, II, 137.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 407.

<sup>190</sup> Conway, *Life*, II, 266-267.

<sup>191</sup> *Writings*, III, 337. See also *ibid.*, I, 74.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 79.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 411.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 251.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 69.

unicameral system of government to bicameralism.<sup>196</sup> This ideal of simplicity and smoothness leads Paine to sanction two other ideas of government: the need for local autonomy and the need for as few general laws as possible. A great advance in the science of government has been made, he says, "by the institution of a system which puts each part of a country in a position to govern all its private affairs."<sup>197</sup> The same tendency to reduce government to the greatest possible simplicity is seen in his attitude toward law. "It is but few general laws that civilized life requires, and those of such common usefulness, that whether they are enforced by the forms of government or not, the effect will be nearly the same."<sup>198</sup> In conclusion Paine says that the principle to be followed is that the amount of government necessary is "a little more than each [man] wants for himself and a great deal less than he thinks necessary for others. Excess of government only tends to incite to and create crimes which else had never existed."<sup>199</sup> And Newtonianism appears to have helped inspire Paine's vision of political ideals applicable universally:

Men who study any universal science, the principles of which are universally known or admitted, and applied without distinction to the common benefit of all countries, obtain thereby a larger share of philanthropy than those who only study national arts and improvements. Natural philosophy, mathematics, and astronomy carry the mind from the country to the creation, and give it a fitness suited to the extent. It was not

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 232-233, 241-244 *passim*. "My idea of a single legislature was always founded on a hope, that whatever personal parties there might be in the state, they would all unite and agree in the general principles of good government—that these party differences would be dropped at the threshold of the statehouse, and that the public good, or the good of the whole, would be the governing principle of the legislature within it" (*ibid.*, II, 182).

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 244.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 408.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 245.

Newton's honor, neither could it be his pride, that he was an Englishman, but that he was a philosopher: the heavens had liberated him from the prejudices of an island, and science had expanded his soul as boundless as his studies.<sup>200</sup>

### III. ECONOMICS

#### 1. *Basic Factors in Paine's Economic Thought*

In an earlier section it has been shown that the traditional view of Paine as an ungoverned and impassioned radical was considerably at variance with the truth. Actually he was a deist of the Enlightenment, conditioned largely by the Newtonian concept of a universe guided by inexorable and divinely-created law. This implies that he approached all the problems of his age in a manner now fairly well defined. At the creation of the world God had promulgated laws on which every aspect of existence is founded. It was generally believed that Locke, Newton,<sup>201</sup> the Deists, and the neo-classical literary critics had discovered these underlying laws in the fields of government, astronomy, religion, and literature.<sup>202</sup> Due to insufficient observation, inherited prejudices, or lack of knowledge, however, men had either misconceived or not yet discovered these divine laws in other fields, including economics. The most important conditioning factor, then, in Paine's economic theory is his attempt to find in these divine laws the basis of all

<sup>200</sup> *Writings*, I, 300; see also II, 103, on science and international brotherhood.

<sup>201</sup> This concept of ideal law was never more succinctly expressed than in Pope's couplet intended as an epitaph for Newton:

"Nature and Nature's laws lay hid in night:  
God said, *Let Newton be!* and all was light."

<sup>202</sup> For the ideas which are basic in most phases of Enlightened Thought, see A. O. Lovejoy's article, "The Parallel of Deism and Classicism," in *Modern Philology*, February, 1932.

economic life. In actual practice this largely amounted to a subjective, deductive application of Newtonian natural law to the field of economics.<sup>203</sup> A second conditioning factor is the unorganized state of economic study itself in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. The classical economy of Adam Smith and the French Physiocrats was first fully expressed with the publication of *The Wealth of Nations* in 1776, yet it was the persistence of the old mercantilistic theory which was among underlying causes of the American Revolution.<sup>204</sup> Even the new thought, however, was far from being a well-developed, consistent system, as the radical differences between Smith and the Physiocrats plainly show. It was easy, then, for one so inexperienced in economic thought, to embrace ideas not wholly valid in the light of modern knowledge. The third major conditioning factor is his commercial class background. He was destined by his Quaker parentage for commercial life. As a result, his successive occupations as staymaker, dissenting teacher, exciseman, and tobacco merchant imbued him with the commercial class spirit to such an extent that for many years after he began to write he was little more than its un-

<sup>203</sup>O. H. Taylor ("Economics and the Idea of Natural Law," *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, XLIV, 16) says that "the evolution of the idea of 'laws' in economics has closely paralleled its evolution in the natural sciences." See also Taylor's valuable dissertation, "The Idea of a 'Natural Order' in Early Modern Economic Thought" (summarized in Harvard University *Summaries of Theses*, 1928, pp. 102-106). See also Preserved Smith, *op. cit.*, pp. 189-225, on the Enlightenment and economic theory.

<sup>204</sup>L. H. Haney (*History of Economic Thought*, p. 157) says that it was not until the middle of the eighteenth century "that Economics was really founded as a science." Note, however, that Sir James Stewart's *Inquiry into the Principles of Political Oeconomy* (1767), only nine years prior to *The Wealth of Nations*, is the first attempt to formulate mercantilistic economy into a systematic theory. It is the high-water mark, says E. A. J. Johnson (*Predecessors of Adam Smith*, p. 9), of an "earnest effort to forge a set of principles out of the fragmentary economic ideas which more than two centuries of turbulent controversy had thrown to the surface."

conscious spokesman.<sup>205</sup> His background does much to explain why he could never be a true agrarian. The last important conditioning factor is his position as an international figure. This not only lent scope to his belief in universal economic law, but enabled him, as his interest vacillated between the newborn American and French republics, to attack the inveterate enemy of the British commercial class—the hereditary monarchy and nobility.

The body of Paine's economic thought can be divided into three categories. First, his conception of the economic world as a great natural community working together under a system of laws as harmonious as the Newtonian solar system itself. Second, his optimistic view of the natural reciprocity of interest between this great natural community and individual self-interest. Divine Providence, he saw, had endowed man with a desire to better his condition and this, without conflict, resulted in the social organism. Third, his application of these two principles to the specific economic problems of his age such as paper money, the bank, taxation, and agrarianism. These three aspects considered in order embrace every significant phase of Paine's economic thought.

Paine believed very firmly in the existence of universal economic laws to which men must conform whether they will or no. It is not our doing a thing with a certain end in mind "that will cause it to produce that end," he says; "the means taken must have a natural ability and tendency within themselves to produce no other, for it is this, not our wishes or policy, that governs the event."<sup>206</sup> Political relations between

<sup>205</sup> Though he makes no reference to it, Paine probably learned much of his early economic thought from such books as Malachy Postlethwayt's *Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*—a strange mixture of half-formulated economic theory and fact of the time. Published in 1751 and revised in 1774, it was widely read in America.

<sup>206</sup> "Prospects of the Rubicon," *Writings*, II, 198.

national states, therefore, must be based on priorly-existing economic law. Hence the only legitimate national policy was free trade. He justified the alliance between France and Spain because it affirmed an economic law, the mines of Peru and Mexico being "the soul of this alliance."<sup>207</sup> On the same basis he justified the American Revolution because British colonial policy was an abrogation of economic law. As early as 1775 he saw American economic life being choked by the mercantile policy of Lord North. American commerce, he says in *The Drama Interpreted*, "has been drying up by repeated restrictions, till by one merciless edict the ruin of it is completed."<sup>208</sup> Only a year later he came out with *Common Sense*, in which he advocated a *laissez-faire*<sup>209</sup> policy which borders on economic determinism. He examines the dependence of America on England, he says, by "the principles of Nature and common sense"<sup>210</sup> and discovers that "Europe, and not England, is the parent country of America."<sup>211</sup> "As Europe is our market for trade, we ought to form no partial connection with any part of it."<sup>212</sup> A nation "in a state of foreign dependence, limited in its commerce, . . . can never arrive at any material eminence." It must have "the legislative powers" in its "own

<sup>207</sup> *Writings*, II, 196.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 50. C. J. Bullock (*Monetary History of the United States*) points out that this was literally true. For a contemporary study of the advantages which the mother country expected to derive from colonies, see A. Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, II, Book IV, Chap. VII, "Of Colonies" (particularly Part III, "Of the Advantages which Europe has derived from the Discovery of America").

<sup>209</sup> Note that Paine's admiration for Smith (*Writings*, II, 314; III, 387 ff.) is explained partly by (1) their similar faith in a universal and benevolent order of nature; (2) their *laissez-faire* attack on coercive and restrictive laws which, according to Turgot, caused the American Revolution; (3) their attempt to minimize the duties and the expense of the sovereign; and (4) their idea that very little government is necessary.

<sup>210</sup> *Writings*, I, 85.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 87.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 88.

hands.”<sup>213</sup> England herself, he thinks, will benefit by American independence because it “is commerce and not the conquest of America by which England is to be benefitted.”<sup>214</sup> As a result, he thinks that the “mercantile and reasonable part of England” will support the Revolution.<sup>215</sup> In *The American Crisis* (1777) Paine puts even greater emphasis on free trade. To a trading country, it is “an article of such importance that the principal source of wealth depends upon it; and it is impossible that any country can flourish . . . whose commerce is engrossed, cramped and fettered by the laws and mandates of another.”<sup>216</sup> By 1780 he felt that America was already reaping the fruits of free trade; already her case shows “the vast advantage of an open trade.”<sup>217</sup> Paine repeated his defense of *laissez-faire* in his *Letter to the Abbé Raynal* (1782)<sup>218</sup> and extended it to other activities in *The Rights of Man* (1791). “Several laws are in existence for regulating and limiting workmen’s wages. Why not leave them as free to make their own bargains, as lawmakers are to let their farms and houses?”<sup>219</sup>

Though Paine opposed commercial restrictions, he favored a strong central government as a protection to commerce. This is not a serious departure from his basic free trade beliefs. In the years from 1780 to 1786 when the American state under the Articles of Confederation was in danger of disintegrating into thirteen separate entities, Paine based one of his arguments for a strong national government on the need for national protection and regulation of commerce. He rightly saw that thirteen states, each legislating its own commercial policy, would be far more inimical to commerce than one strong state. As early as the *Crisis* Paine realized that as long as we were “a medley of individual nothings,” foreign nations will “govern our trade by their own laws and proclamations as they please.”<sup>220</sup>

<sup>213</sup> *Writings*, I, 114.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 204.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 501.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 114.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 319.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 378-379.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 120.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 80.

It is only "by acting in union" that foreign usurpation of our trade "can be counteracted, and security extended to the commerce of America."<sup>221</sup> He amplifies this argument considerably in his letters<sup>222</sup> to Rhode Island on the Five Per Cent Impost in 1781 to 1783. The controversy arose when Rhode Island defeated a five per cent impost levy by refusing to ratify the measure after all the other states had approved it. Paine wrote six letters in which he tries to reason the Rhode Islanders into passing the impost levy. In the course of the letters he comes to the conclusion that commerce is too universal to be under the control of individual states. "Commerce is not the local property of any State, any more than it is the legal property of any person. . . . But as the commerce of every State is made up out of the produce and consumption of other States, as well as its own, therefore its regulation and protection can only be under the confederated patronage of all the States."<sup>223</sup> From this he arrives at an assumption which sounds like commercial regulation by government. "The fairest prospects may fail," he says, "and the best calculated system of finance become unproductive of its end, if left to the caprice of temper and self-interest."<sup>224</sup> Paine's stand on the impost can be partially harmonized with his free trade ideas, as has been indicated, but undoubtedly the real motivating force at this time was his patriotism which made him forget for the moment his oft repeated assertion that commerce by its own power could rule the world. He took the same position in the last years of his life by supporting Jefferson's Embargo.<sup>225</sup>

Paine's belief in ideal economic law had other applications.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 379-380.

<sup>222</sup> *Six New Letters of Thomas Paine*, ed. H. H. Clark, University of Wisconsin Press (1939).

<sup>223</sup> Letter III.

<sup>224</sup> Letter IV.

<sup>225</sup> Letter to Jefferson, July 8, 1808.

In 1779 when peace was being proposed, the English insisted that the United States give up her fishing rights to the Newfoundland banks. Paine opposed the idea in three letters to the *Pennsylvania Gazette* by insisting that our fishing right was "a natural right."<sup>226</sup> Contiguous territories, he says, have a natural economic interest in each other which cannot be signed away by treaty. Without the fisheries America would have no independence because only a political state founded upon underlying economic laws is stable. "There are but two natural sources of wealth and strength—the Earth and the Ocean—and to lose the right to either is, in our situation, to put up the other to sale."<sup>227</sup>

His conception of the economic interdependence of the world led Paine to insist on the freedom of the seas. The sea is "the world's highway," he said, "and he who arrogates a prerogative over it, transgresses the right, and justly brings on himself the chastisement of the nations."<sup>228</sup> Therefore Paine was led to consider the effect of navies on commerce. In 1776 he thought the two complemented one another; "to unite the sinews of commerce and defense is sound policy..."<sup>229</sup> By 1780, with the Revolution well on the way to a successful conclusion by the alliance with France, Paine had changed his mind; we ought "to turn the navy into hard money" and rely on the French navy for protection.<sup>230</sup> And by 1792, Paine had come to the conclusion that commerce needed no other protection "than the reciprocal interest which every nation feels in supporting it."<sup>231</sup> The operation of economic law is universal and inevitable, and, as a consequence, commerce contains within itself "the means of its own protection."<sup>232</sup>

<sup>226</sup> "Peace, and the Newfoundland Fisheries," *Writings*, II, 10.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 14.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 128.

<sup>229</sup> "Common Sense," *Writings*, I, 106.

<sup>230</sup> "The American Crisis," *Writings*, I, 311.

<sup>231</sup> "Rights of Man," *Writings*, II, 460.

<sup>232</sup> "The Eighteenth Fructidor," *Writings*, III, 366.

Commercially considered, then, navies "are losses."<sup>233</sup> The English attempt to abrogate economic law and monopolize the sea had led only to financial ruin.<sup>234</sup>

Two factors seem to underlie the change in Paine's viewpoint. First, he was coming to believe more and more in the efficacy of economic law to govern the world. And as a corollary, his antipathy to commercial restrictions of all kinds was increasing. Second, his position as a polemicist, favoring the French as against the English cause, colored all his assertions on economic subjects.

These two factors also form the basis of the stand he took later on other commercial problems involving universal economic law. In his letter to Washington in 1796 he made a vicious attack on the Jay Treaty with England. The treaty on the whole was advantageous to the United States, but did agree to some irksome restrictions on American commerce. Paine ignored its good points and condemned the treaty, partly on the basis of the commercial restrictions, but chiefly on the fact that it was inimical to French interests. All America's "rights of commerce and navigation are to begin anew," he said, "and that with loss of character to begin with."<sup>235</sup> Shortly after his return to America in 1802, Paine was forced to face another important commercial problem. In 1803 American commerce was threatened with annihilation by the English Orders in Council and Napoleon's Milan Decree. Paine proposed to solve the problem by calling a Non-Importation Convention which would make use of a commercial embargo to force the warring nations to respect American commerce.<sup>236</sup> Thus he takes the position that what a navy could not do, an economic boycott could. Paine carried this idea

<sup>233</sup> *Writings*, III, 365.

<sup>234</sup> See "Peace and the Newfoundland Fisheries," *Writings*, II, 13-25.

<sup>235</sup> *Writings*, III, 252. See also *ibid.*, 420 and 239 ff.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 418-419.

one step farther. Later in the same year he resurrected his earlier proposal for a Maritime Compact, "an Unarmed Association of Nations for the protection of the Rights and Commerce of Nations that shall be neutral in time of War."<sup>237</sup> The purpose of the Compact was to enforce the rights of neutral countries by means of economic pressure.

The economic boycott marks the high point of Paine's belief in the existence of basic economic law and its power to govern the world. The second central principle in his economic theory complements the first by correlating individual self-interest with these universal laws. Paine took the view popularized in the eighteenth century by Pope, according to whom God and Nature "bade Self-love and Social be the same."<sup>238</sup> Since all social law is divinely promulgated and the human reason is divinely guided, there could be no real antithesis between individual self-interest and economic social good.<sup>239</sup> Hence each individual merely by heeding the demands of his wants would gravitate toward harmony with society. Thus in both realms Paine stands for *laissez-faire*.<sup>240</sup> "Where nature and interest reinforce with each other," he said, "the compact is too intimate to be dissolved."<sup>241</sup>

<sup>237</sup> *Writings*, III, 421. The Compact was originally written and presented to "the ministers of all the neutral nations then in Paris in the summer of 1800" (*ibid.*, III, 426). See also *ibid.*, IV, 52. Paine, however, seems to have had the idea somewhat earlier. In 1797 he suggested the idea of an association of neutral nations to eliminate war by economic embargo (see *ibid.*, III, 366).

<sup>238</sup> Pope's *Essay on Man*, Epistle III, line 318. See Paine's *Writings*, IV, 342, 392.

<sup>239</sup> See *Adam Smith, 1776-1926* (Chicago, 1928), by J. M. Clark, J. Viner, et al., pp. 118, 127-128, 168, 178.

<sup>240</sup> See Kaye's introduction to Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees* (p. cxxxix) on *laissez-faire*: "This is the theory that commercial affairs are happiest when least regulated by the government; that things tend by themselves to find their own proper level; and that unregulated self-seeking on the part of individuals will in society so interact with and check itself that the result will be for the benefit of the community."

<sup>241</sup> *Writings*, I, 296.

The principle of self-interest as the motive power in human nature is one which Paine held throughout his life, although it is especially important in his writings before *The Rights of Man*. In *The American Crisis* it is this principle which he appeals to when he tries to reason the colonists into supporting the Revolution. When our interest and honor "are interwoven not only with the security but the *increase of property*, there exists not a man in America . . . who does not see that his good is connected with keeping up a sufficient defense."<sup>242</sup> His adherence to the principle of self-interest is stated even more positively in *The Rights of Man* (1792). "The most effectual process," he says, "is that of improving the condition of man by means of his interest; and it is on this ground that I take my stand."<sup>243</sup> He restated the principle in *Agrarian Justice* (1797) in a less idealistic form. In any plan, he says, where "justice and humanity are the foundation of principles, interest ought not to be admitted into the calculation, yet it is always of advantage to the establishment of any plan to show that it is beneficial as a matter of interest."<sup>244</sup>

The occupation in which Paine saw self-interest operate is a very significant part of his theory. He followed Adam Smith<sup>245</sup> in asserting that the division of labor is the chief source of wealth. Cultivation, he says in *Agrarian Justice*, "has given to created earth a tenfold value."<sup>246</sup> In contrast to the old mercantilists who saw wealth wholly in terms of hard money derived from exploiting one's neighbors and the French Physiocrats who saw it only in terms of the natural products of land, the new theory enormously widened the possibilities of wealth.

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 313.

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 456.

<sup>244</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 339.

<sup>245</sup> Note the full title of Smith's book: *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*. Note also the first sentence: "The annual labor of every nation is the fund which originally supplies it with all the necessities and conveniences of life."

<sup>246</sup> *Writings*, III, 331.

This new emphasis on the source of *wealth* had a tremendous effect on men's conception of the whole economic system. For the first time the true interrelation of the three great divisions of the world's economic life—the agricultural, the commercial, and the industrial—were realized for once and for all. However, though Smith saw the true interdependence of the economic life, his chief emphasis is still on the old commercial-agricultural life. He lived too early to know the possibilities of manufacturing. To his mind the two chief ways by which labor created wealth were still by agriculture and commerce; that is, the growing of natural products on the soil and the transportation of them from an area of low utility to an area of high utility.<sup>247</sup>

Paine follows quite closely this train of thought. Like Smith he emphasizes the interdependence of the economic life. "Let us hasten," he says, "to give encouragement to agriculture and manufacture, that commerce may reinstate itself, and our people have employment."<sup>248</sup> Like Smith<sup>249</sup> also he considered manufacturing to be the least valuable economic pursuit. Even at their best, he says, manufactures "are very unstable sources of national wealth. The reason is that they seldom continue long in one state. The market for them depends on the caprice of fashions, and sometimes of politics in foreign countries, and they are at all times exposed to rivalry as well as to change."<sup>250</sup> Paine, however, as we shall see later,

<sup>247</sup> See C. Gide and C. Rist, *A History of Economic Doctrines from the Time of the Physiocrats to the Present Day*, pp. 65-68.

<sup>248</sup> *Writings*, IV, 257.

<sup>249</sup> The manufacturers, he said, have "generally an interest to deceive and even to oppress the public, and who accordingly have, upon many occasions, both deceived and oppressed it" (quoted by Gide and Rist, *op. cit.*, p. 66).

<sup>250</sup> *Writings*, II, 15. Paine's interest in inventions at first glance seems to contradict this. In 1789 he wrote to Jefferson from England: "I have been to see the cotton mills—the potteries—the steel furnaces, tinplate manufacture—white lead manufacture—all these

did not follow Smith in his admiration for agrarianism. It is commerce which is the center of his economic system. Commerce, he says, is like blood: "it cannot be taken from the whole mass in circulation" without the whole partaking of the loss. Should the "government of England destroy the commerce of all other nations, she would most effectually ruin her own."<sup>251</sup> Paine scoffs at the old mercantilistic idea of a balance of trade. The merchants of London and Newcastle trade on the same principles as if they lived in different countries.<sup>252</sup> But no nation can be "the seller and buyer of her own merchandise. The ability to buy must reside out of herself; and, therefore, the prosperity of any commercial nation is regulated by the prosperity of the rest."<sup>253</sup>

Paine's emphasis on commerce is further shown by his defense of the commercial class against the English nobility. "The contempt," he says, "in which the old government held mercantile pursuits, and the obloquy that attached on merchants and manufactures, contributed not a little to . . . its eventual subversion . . ."<sup>254</sup> To the argument that royalty was needed to protect the people from the tyranny of powerful

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things might easily be carried on in America" (*Writings*, IV, 101). J. M. Robertson (in his introduction to *The Age of Reason*, p. xi) says that as early "as 1778 he proposed the application of the steam-engine to navigation and counselled Fulton who was his friend." He praised the discoveries of the American Philosophical Society and did himself invent a planing machine, a new crane, a smokeless candle, a scheme for using gunpowder as a motor, and an iron bridge which received considerable attention. (See Conway, *Life*, *passim*). It would be a mistake, however, to think that he saw at that time the connection between invention and manufacturing which we now know to have existed. The two things were still separate activities in the eighteenth century. For instance, Adam Smith, who, as we have seen, thoroughly disliked manufacturing, yet took very great interest in inventions of every sort.

<sup>251</sup> *Writings*, II, 457.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 459-460.

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 457.

<sup>254</sup> "The Constitution of 1795," *Writings*, III, 282-283.

nobles, Paine asks instead for the establishment of the middle class.

Establish the Rights of Man; enthrone Equality, . . . let there be no privileges, no distinctions of birth, no monopolies; make safe the liberty of industry and of trade, the equal distribution of family inheritances, publicity of administration, freedom of press: these things all established, you will be assured of good laws, and need not fear the powerful men. Willingly or unwillingly, all citizens will be under the Law.<sup>255</sup>

Earlier in *The American Crisis* he had appealed to the self-interest of "the mercantile and manufacturing part" of England against the nobility. "It is *your interest* to see America an independent, and not a conquered country. . . . It matters nothing to you who governs America, if your manufacture find a consumption there."<sup>256</sup> In England all improvements in commerce have been made in opposition to the government. "It is from the enterprise and industry of the individuals, and their numerous associations, . . . that these improvements have proceeded." No man gave a thought to the government when he was doing "these things; and all he had to hope with respect to government, was, *that it would let him alone.*"<sup>257</sup>

We may say, then, that Paine's ideal economic system as far as the individual is concerned assumes two basic things. The world is made up of individuals whose economic wants draw them into harmonious relationships. And the direction of this self-interest is chiefly commercial, though agriculture and manufacturing are contributory factors. There are several reasons why Paine gave such emphasis to commerce in his system. It was still the dominant thought of his time. The influence of his commercial class background with its *laissez-faire* tendencies

<sup>255</sup> "Royalty," *Writings*, III, 107-108.

<sup>256</sup> *Writings*, I, 287.

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 442.

is undoubtedly a large factor.<sup>258</sup> His idealistic philosophy with its Newtonian associations would undoubtedly also see commerce as the center of the system. But a fourth stream of thought must be brought in to fully explain this emphasis. This is the strong cast of utilitarian thought found in his writings, especially the later pamphlets. Whatever form of government a country has, he wrote in *Rights of Man*, "it ought to have no other object than the general happiness."<sup>259</sup> Applied to economics, this doctrine means that poverty (pain) leads to evil, while affluence (pleasure) leads to good. "Though I care as little about riches, as any man," he said, "I am a friend to riches because they are capable of good."<sup>260</sup> The way to reach this state of plenty is through commerce. "I am an advocate for commerce," he said, "because I am a friend to its effects. It is a pacific system, operating to cordialize mankind, by rendering nations, as well as individuals, useful to each other." And as such it is far superior to "mere theoretical reformation."<sup>261</sup>

This leads directly to the greatest service of commerce to mankind—its undoubted power to exterminate war. All that can result from war, he keeps telling the English people during the American and French Revolutions, are higher taxes and the destruction of commerce.<sup>262</sup> He emphasizes over and over that no economic advantage can be gained by war. In economics what is to happen will happen whether there are wars or no. "It therefore cannot be policy to go to war to effect that at great expense, which will naturally happen of itself. . . ."<sup>263</sup> What possible inducement, he asks, has the farmer of one

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 328. "It is chiefly the dissenters," he said, "that have carried English manufactures to the height they are now at . . ."

<sup>259</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 454.

<sup>260</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 337.

<sup>261</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 456. See also p. 104.

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 200. The whole essay, "Prospects on the Rubicon," 1787, develops the idea that commercial interests, if free, will unite all nations in peaceful harmony and prevent wars.

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 282 ff.; II, 194; III, 134.

country to "go to war with the peaceful farmer of another country? Or what inducement has the manufacturer?"<sup>264</sup> From this Paine comes to the conclusion that were commerce "permitted to act to the universal extent it is capable, it would extirpate the system of war, and produce a revolution in the uncivilized state of governments."<sup>265</sup> Already, he thinks, "the increase of commerce" has lessened the war spirit in England.<sup>266</sup>

## 2. *Application of Paine's Ideas to Specific Problems*

The remainder of Paine's economic thought deals with the application of his ideas. Three of his most important pamphlets concern economic problems of his time. *Dissertations on Government; the Affairs of the Bank; and Paper Money* (1786) attempts to settle such burning colonial problems as the inviolability of charters granted to commercial corporations by the colonial governments, the position and function of banking institutions in colonial society, and the restriction of paper money. *The Decline and Fall of the English System of Finance* (1796) is an attack on the English system of government finance. *Agrarian Justice* (1797) is one of the earliest attempts to solve the economic problem created by the development of an unpropertied working class in the last quarter of the century. Like the times in which they were written, the temper of the three pamphlets rises from mild conservatism in the first to a form of liberalism in the third which was to become one of the dominant forces in the nineteenth century.

Like most of Paine's writings prior to his removal to France in 1787, the *Dissertations* pamphlet is conservative in tone.<sup>267</sup> It is the product of the most balanced period of his life.

<sup>264</sup> *Writings*, II, 413.

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 456.

<sup>266</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 107.

<sup>267</sup> It is a significant fact that Parrington (*op. cit.*, I, 327-341), wishing to make Paine a radical, makes no reference to this very important pamphlet. Paine, however, was conservative on several matters at this period. See *Six New Letters of Thomas Paine* (Uni-

He was intimately associated with men like Washington, Morris, and John Adams, and undoubtedly was much influenced by their conservatism. The cause of the pamphlet itself is now well known. Morris and others in 1780 had subscribed a fund to aid the army. In order to increase the efficiency of the fund, they used it to establish a bank which was given a charter by Pennsylvania in 1782. In 1785-1786 the agrarian-debtor interests gained control of the legislature and began an attack on the charter.<sup>268</sup> Paine contended that the Pennsylvania Assembly of 1786 had no legal right to abrogate the charter granted by the Assembly of 1782.<sup>269</sup> Thus in defending the inviolability of the charter he took the side of the conservative commercial interests against agrarian and debtor interests. The second part of the pamphlet defends the bank as an institution by explaining its function in the colonial financial structure. The petitions demanding the repeal of the charter charged in the main that the bank banned specie from the country, maintained itself independent of any obligation to the government, endangered public prosperity by accumulating wealth, encouraged foreign investments drawing large sums in interest out of the country, and, lastly, prohibited the issue of paper money.<sup>270</sup> Paine replied to all these charges,

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versity of Wisconsin Press, 1939) with an introduction by H. H. Clark, where it is shown that Paine, like Hamilton, called for a strong central government as early as 1781-1782. In the latter part of *The Crisis*, Paine, with Noah Webster, was arguing for increased taxation in place of paper money as a means of supporting the war (*Political Works*, I, 324). Note also that *Public Good* (1780) advocates national, as against state, ownership of western lands.

<sup>268</sup> On backgrounds see *Writings*, II, 149-153. A good secondary source is W. G. Sumner, *Robert Morris; Financier and Revolutionist*.

<sup>269</sup> *Writings*, II, 145.

<sup>270</sup> The petitions were submitted by a considerable number of the inhabitants of Berks and the city of Philadelphia. A glance at a map will show that Chester and Berks by their position were frontier counties in 1781. Paine gives the full text of the petitions in footnotes (see *Writings*, II, 155-157).

and not the mere interest they receive, that is the inducement to them.”<sup>278</sup> As an instrument for the promotion of commerce, the bank becomes a matter of general social good “in which all the state is interested.”<sup>279</sup>

The last third of the pamphlet is devoted to a defense of the bank for opposing issues of paper money. From the beginning paper money was regarded by the colonists as the cure-all for financial ailments. The Revolution itself was largely financed by it. The ever large class of colonial debtors found relief through it. Hence it was a lively and dangerous issue to oppose. Paine, however, faced the issue squarely. Nature, he says, has provided gold and silver as “the proper materials for money.”<sup>280</sup> Therefore when an assembly undertakes “to issue paper as money, the whole scheme of safety and certainty is overturned, and property set afloat.”<sup>281</sup> “Most of the advocates for tender laws,” he says, “are those who have debts to discharge, and who take refuge in such a law, to violate their contracts and cheat their creditors.”<sup>282</sup> This was the situation exactly. And by his stand Paine put himself plainly on the side of the merchant class against the debtor-agrarian interests.<sup>283</sup>

<sup>278</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 170. Undoubtedly the convenience was a great inducement, but W. G. Sumner, *op. cit.*, p. 102, says that for the first three years the bank paid a dividend of from thirteen to fourteen per cent.

<sup>279</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 163.

<sup>280</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 184.

<sup>281</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 177.

<sup>282</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 181.

<sup>283</sup> The traditional explanation of Paine's stand in the pamphlet has been the charge that he was hired by Morris to defend the bank. There is no direct evidence to prove this; furthermore, the fact that he seems to have held the same views throughout life lessens the significance of such a charge even if proved. See also F. C. James, “The Bank of North America and the Financial History of Philadelphia,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, LXIV, 56-87; and A. J. McClurkin, “Summary of the Bank of North America Records,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, LXIV, 88-96.

Many things had happened between Paine's defense of the bank and his later pamphlets. In 1787 he went to France and soon became a fervent supporter of the early Revolution. In writing *Rights of Man* (1791-1792) and *The Age of Reason* (1794-1796) he had moved farther to the left.<sup>284</sup> The real object of his attack now became the old régime in England—the hereditary enemy of the rising commercial class. And the real purpose of his *Decline and Fall* (1796) is to instigate a run on the Bank of England in order to break the government. It is therefore no difficult task to reconcile his defense of the American bank with his attack on the English bank. The first was merely a “company for the promotion and convenience of commerce,”<sup>285</sup> while the latter was the prop of the English aristocracy and monarchy.

The pamphlet itself reveals two very important sides of Paine's economic thought—the application of Newtonian natural law to economics, and his commercial class consciousness. Paine contended that the English funding system, which over a long period had maintained government credit under an ever-increasing national debt by paying the interest with new borrowings, bore the symptoms of decay. Inherently, he said, this was only another form of paper money, and he proceeded to work out the law of its dissolution, the ratio “*which the nature of the thing has established for itself*.”<sup>286</sup> Applying the ratio to the future, he predicted that in twenty years<sup>287</sup> the funding system would march “to its irredeemable dissolution.”<sup>288</sup> The important thing is not Paine's prediction, but his faith that every financial structure, like the physical universe,

<sup>284</sup>It should never be forgotten, however, that while Paine is usually regarded as an extremist, the French Revolutionists themselves regarded him as dangerously moderate after 1793.

<sup>285</sup>*Writings*, II, 163.

<sup>286</sup>*Ibid.*, III, 289. Italics mine.

<sup>287</sup>*Ibid.*, III, 295.

<sup>288</sup>*Ibid.*, III, 293.

has an inexorable law by which it is governed. Who could have supposed, he concludes, that falling systems

admitted of a ratio apparently as true as the descent of falling bodies? I have not *made* the ratio any more than Newton made the ratio of gravitation. I have only discovered it, and explained the mode of applying it.<sup>289</sup>

In attacking the funding system Paine reveals also his commercial class consciousness in several ways. He attacks paper money and wants instead a sound money policy.<sup>290</sup> He deplores the system of wars and the increase in taxation and debt which follow.<sup>291</sup> He finds occasion to attack Pitt for foisting on the nation that "motley, amphibious-charactered thing called the *balance of trade*."<sup>292</sup> He makes a plea for independent enterprise by condemning the dependence of the bank on the government, a connection, he says, "that threatens to ruin every public bank."<sup>293</sup> Finally he sees in the funding system an instrument by which the dissolute aristocracy, "of *arch-treasurers*," are rapidly leading the nation "into bankruptcy."<sup>294</sup> In the last analysis, then, the aristocracy becomes a mere hang-over from corrupt medieval society and a dead weight on a free economic system.

Earlier in the *Rights of Man* Paine made a direct attack on the property basis of the aristocracy. He analyzed the "landed interest," which Burke attempted to defend, as "a combination of aristocratical land-holders, opposing their own pecuniary interest to that of the farmer, and every branch of trade, commerce, and manufacture." The aristocratic landed interests, he asserted, were "not the farmers who work the land," but parasites who consumed the "rent."<sup>295</sup> But in attacking the

<sup>289</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 292.

<sup>290</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 297.

<sup>291</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 302, 308.

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 304, note.

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 306.

<sup>294</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 310-311.

<sup>295</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 470-471.

law of primogeniture,<sup>296</sup> Paine makes it very clear that he is attacking only the *aristocratic* basis of property. Property itself will always be unequal, due to the inequality of industry, talent, management, frugality, and opportunity. All that needs to be "required with respect to property is to obtain it honestly, and not employ it criminally; but it is always criminally employed when it is made a criterion for exclusive rights."<sup>297</sup> Thus his argument is no more or less than the plea of the rising commercial class in the latter part of the 18th century for the right of free endeavor against the feudal system of property ownership.

His last pamphlet, *Agrarian Justice*, which has long been mistaken for an exposition of agrarian philosophy,<sup>298</sup> in reality is merely a more definite and astute attack on the English aristocracy in favor of the non-agrarian, non-aristocratic classes. How fundamentally non-agrarian Paine's thought is can be seen by his concept of the source of wealth. The "cultivator and the manufacturer," he says, "are the primary means of all the wealth that exists in the world beyond what nature spontaneously produces."<sup>299</sup> The contrast of this with the position of a true agrarian like Franklin clearly reveals Paine's natural affinity with the commercial class. There are but three ways of acquiring wealth, says Franklin:

The first is by *war*, as the Romans did, in plundering their conquered neighbors. This is *robbery*. The second by *commerce*, which is generally *cheating*. The third by *agriculture*,

<sup>296</sup> "Primogeniture ought to be abolished, not only because it is unnatural and unjust, but because the country suffers by its operation" (*Writings*, III, 500).

<sup>297</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 268.

<sup>298</sup> Parrington (*op. cit.*, I, 337) asserts that "Paine, like Jefferson, was essentially a Physiocratic agrarian." Gide and Rist, *op. cit.*, p. 21, who have thoroughly examined the Physiocratic position, assert that the Physiocrats "never appreciated the weakness of the landowners' position, and they always treated them with the greatest reverence."

<sup>299</sup> *Writings*, III, 268.

the only *honest way*, wherein a man receives a real increase of the seed thrown into the ground . . .<sup>300</sup>

Paine had no such vision of an agrarian economy. He merely reasserts a very old English belief that all men have a natural right to the soil.<sup>301</sup> The notion was given new prominence toward the end of the 18th century both by the prevalence of the natural rights' doctrine and the rise of the commercial and unpropertied working classes.<sup>302</sup>

Paine claimed that all property could be divided into two kinds: the uncultivated earth or natural property, and the improvements. He defended the right of the individual to "improved" property, but asserted that the earth "in its natural uncultivated state was, and ever would . . . continue to be, *the common property of the human race*."<sup>303</sup> The introduction of landed property, therefore, "dispossessed more than half the inhabitants of every nation of their natural inheritance, without providing . . . an indemnification for that loss, and has thereby created a species of poverty and wretchedness that did not exist before."<sup>304</sup> To right this wrong Paine claims that every proprietor "of cultivated land, owes to the community a *ground-rent* . . . for the land which he holds . . ."<sup>305</sup> With the money thus obtained Paine proposes,

<sup>300</sup> *Franklin*, ed. by F. L. Mott and C. Jorgenson, American Writers Series, pp. 346-347.

<sup>301</sup> Gide and Rist (*op. cit.*, p. 559) assert that the idea is the instinctive possession of every nation, but that "in England the feeling seems more general than elsewhere, because, possibly, of the number of large proprietors and of the serious abuses to which the system has given rise. . . . Even as far back as the seventeenth century, Locke, in his work *On Civil Government*, had ventured to declare that God had given the land as common property to the children of men."

<sup>302</sup> The idea was most notably expressed before Paine in the work of Thomas Spence in 1775 and William Ogilvie in 1781.

<sup>303</sup> *Writings*, III, 329. Locke makes the same distinction in his chapter, "Of Property," in *On Civil Government*.

<sup>304</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 331.

<sup>305</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 329.

To create a National Fund, out of which there shall be paid to every person, when arrived at the age of twenty-one years, the sum of fifteen pounds sterling, as a compensation in part, for the loss of his or her natural inheritance, by the system of landed property.

And also, the sum of ten pounds per annum, during life, to every person now living, of the age of fifty years, and to all others as they shall arrive at that age.<sup>306</sup>

It is only by so "organizing civilization . . . that the whole weight of misery can be removed." Paine claimed that his proposal would do that. It would relieve the lame, the blind, and the aged poor; it would prevent the rising generation from becoming poor; and it would do all this "without deranging or interfering with any national measures."<sup>307</sup>

In plain words Paine's proposal is a tax on the English aristocracy<sup>308</sup> for the benefit of the lower classes. It is his most radical economic statement. It not only is not agrarian in temper, but actually points toward the sociological liberalism of the on-coming nineteenth-century industrial society. And as such, it may be asserted that, at the end of his life, Paine sponsored a line of thought which was to find expression in Bentham and Mill on one side and the Chartist Movement on the other.<sup>309</sup> It should be noted that, in *Common Sense*, Paine began to regard government as a necessary evil, the less of it the better, and he ended in *Agrarian Justice* with an adumbration of the socialist view that government can by its collective power be beneficial, constructive, and humanitarian. In the light of Newtonianism, he believed that enlightened economic self-

<sup>306</sup> *Writings*, III, 331.

<sup>307</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 338.

<sup>308</sup> The pamphlet obviously does not apply to America where land was only too plentiful. Besides, Paine had not been in America for ten years.

<sup>309</sup> For an interesting study of the whole subject see J. Dorfman, "The Economic Philosophy of Thomas Paine," *Political Science Quarterly*, LIII, 372-386 (September, 1938).

interest, if given free play in international commerce, would cause all nations to gravitate toward harmonious unity and friendship.

#### IV. HUMANITARIANISM

Today the most effective and appealing part of Paine's whole creed is the practicality of his humanitarianism. There is little in him of the aimless romantic's sorrow for suffering, or indeterminate sympathy for man in the abstract. He admired Rousseau and Raynal for their "sentiment in favor of liberty," but he plainly saw their weakness in the fact that, "having raised the animation, they do not direct its operation, and leave the mind in love with an object, without describing the means of possessing it."<sup>310</sup> He was careful to give his most humanitarian document, the Second Part of the *Rights of Man*, the subtitle, "Combining principle and practice."<sup>311</sup> As a rationalist of the Enlightenment he found social deformity irrational; as a Quaker nonconformist he found it inhuman.<sup>312</sup> Paine is never tired of affirming that man has become too enlightened to allow unnecessary evil to remain in the world. "There is a morning of reason rising upon man . . . that has not appeared before." Man, uncorrupted by civilization, "is naturally the friend of man, and . . . human nature is not of itself vicious." Therefore social evil, if not upheld by government sanction, will naturally yield to the "dictates of reason, interest, and humanity."<sup>313</sup>

<sup>310</sup> *Writings*, II, 334.

<sup>311</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 390.

<sup>312</sup> Crane Brinton (in the *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, VII, 544-548) says that the best expression of Christianity at this time is the practical effort to alleviate suffering by the efforts of the evangelical sects of Wesley and the nonconformist Quakers. F. J. Klingberg (*The Anti-Slavery Movement in England: A Study in English Humanitarianism*, p. 33) shows that the agitation of the American Quakers in the last quarter of the 18th century contributed to the rise of the antislavery movement in England.

<sup>313</sup> *Writings*, II, 453.

### 1. *A Practical Humanitarian*

Paine clearly saw that the practical need for humanitarianism was the consequence of civilization itself. A large mass of people in civilized society, he saw, were "in a state of poverty and wretchedness, far below the condition of an Indian" of North America.<sup>314</sup> Thus at the present time "the most affluent and the most miserable of the human race are to be found in the countries that are called civilized."<sup>315</sup> There is a great deal of justice in Paine's plea for a more humanitarian policy in government. Society was undergoing a revolution in his time. The old medieval society was rapidly crumbling away with the onslaught of modern industrial society. The new organization brought great benefits, but it also brought in its train a large number of social problems. The social sciences were not yet discovered and men generally were unaware of the new problems—so unaware that it was not until the great Reform Bill of 1832 that any important change was made. But to observing men of the middle class, who, like Paine,<sup>316</sup> were in intimate contact with the condition of the people, the new situation was very clear. Thus for him the test of adequate government is the promotion of "the public good."<sup>317</sup> Though part of it comes from his Enlightened theory of government, not a little

<sup>314</sup> *Writings*, II, 454.

<sup>315</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 328.

<sup>316</sup> Paine's humanitarian feeling toward the unfortunate generally seems genuine enough to have arisen from his observation of actual conditions. The hearts of the humane, he says (*Writings*, II, 493), are "shocked by ragged and hungry children" and the aged "begging for bread." The sight of misery, and "the unpleasant sensations it suggests," he says (*ibid.*, III, 337), pleading for his *Agrarian Justice* plan, "... are a greater drawback upon the felicity of affluence than the proposed 10 per cent upon property is worth." So Gamaliel Bradford ("Thomas Paine," in *Damaged Souls*) testifies that "in the larger sympathy for the poor and downtrodden Paine's merits were real and his accomplishment substantial."

<sup>317</sup> *Writings*, II, 137.

of the vehemence with which he attacks the feudalistic remains of the state and church in England comes from the contrast of their affluence and corruption with the poverty and suffering of a large mass of the people. A government which annually extorted seventeen millions from the poor and spent nine millions for interest on old war debts and eight millions preparing for new wars and for sinecure pensions obviously could not stand in the face of widespread suffering.<sup>318</sup> He attacked the monarchy for the same reason. "It is inhuman," he said, "to talk of a million sterling a year, paid out of the public taxes of any country, for the support of any individual, whilst thousands who are forced to contribute thereto, are pining with want and struggling with misery."<sup>319</sup> By the same process Paine was led to attack the church which was the ultimate sanction for the throne. Christians themselves who constantly defended the feudal hierarchy on Biblical authority<sup>320</sup> and exalted "God's Wisdom in Having Made both Rich and Poor"<sup>321</sup> forced Paine to attack Christianity itself. Paine thought that the priests would be better employed if they spent "their time in rendering the general condition of man less miserable than it is. Practical religion consists in doing good; and the only way

<sup>318</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 36, 137, 421.

<sup>319</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 448. Little would the uninformed observer think, he says (*ibid.*, II, 403), that the "hordes of miserable poor" in the old countries "were the consequence of what in such countries they call government." Note that he also thought (*ibid.*, II, 500) that the system of primogeniture "ought to be abolished."

<sup>320</sup> The numerous clergymen who attacked *The Rights of Man* for tracing inequalities and suffering to the throne were fond of confounding Paine with such texts as the following: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be, are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist, shall receive to themselves damnation" (Romans, 13). This may account for his peculiar antipathy to St. Paul.

<sup>321</sup> The title of a sermon preached by Bishop Watson, which Paine said (*Writings*, III, 327) led him to publish *Agrarian Justice*.

of serving God is that of endeavoring to make his Creation happy."<sup>322</sup> Paine believed that the way to do that was for the government to inaugurate a comprehensive social policy. He is one of the first to realize that the social problem of his time had become too large for private philanthropy.<sup>323</sup> The magnificent charities established by individuals are not enough, he said in *Agrarian Justice*. "It is only by organizing civilization upon such principles as to act like a system of pulleys, that the whole weight of misery can be removed."<sup>324</sup> Unless conditions were improved by peaceful change, a "violent" revolution would be the consequence. Paine argued that it was foolish to put off humanitarian reform so long when the same good could be obtained by a "passive, rational, and costless revolution." It may be "an honor to the animal faculties of man to obtain redress by courage and danger, but it is far

<sup>322</sup> *Writings*, III, 327. See also, *ibid.*, IV, 419.

<sup>323</sup> Paine's analysis of the changed situation as early as 1792 is remarkably acute, and is essentially sound today. B. Kirkman Gray (*A History of English Philanthropy: From the Dissolution of the Monasteries to the Taking of the First Census* [London, 1905]), shows that for 120 years preceding 1800, the year of the first census, English philanthropy was entirely of a private nature. By that year, however, philanthropists had learned (p. 283) "that the amount of want was far greater than the efforts made to relieve it. . . . The origin of this [new] want, of the pervasive and persistent inequalities and distress which characterise the modern state, are to be sought in the industrial system, in an organization under which the total wealth of the nation has increased so rapidly, under which also there has been so huge a concurrent out-throw of poverty, and poverty-born disease." Paine himself was forced to insist over and over that his plea of public aid for the unfortunate was not mere charity. "It is not charity but a right, not bounty but justice, that I am pleading for" (*Writings*, III, 337).

<sup>324</sup> *Writings*, III, 337. "Out of this fact," says Gray (*op. cit.*, p. 285), "springs the principle of action which gives its distinct character to the philanthropy of the nineteenth century. This is the principle of *State intervention*. This is the mark of the nineteenth, exactly as voluntary association is the characteristic of the eighteenth century."

greater honor to the rational faculties to accomplish the same object by reason, accommodation, and general consent."<sup>325</sup>

Paine's efforts in the interest of peaceful reform touched at one time or another most phases of the rising humanitarian movement in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Like most other reformers of this period, Paine's first important phase of humanitarian interest was his opposition to slavery. A few weeks after coming to America he wrote the short article, "African Slavery in America" (1774), now a pioneer document in the American anti-slavery movement.<sup>326</sup> Slavery, he says, has often been "proved contrary to the light of nature, to every principle of Justice and Humanity, and even good policy, by a succession of eminent men, and several late publications."<sup>327</sup> Paine's appeal is almost exclusively moral and

<sup>325</sup> *Writings*, II, 514.

<sup>326</sup> Important works and incidents in America immediately foreshadowing Paine's abolitionism were: "A Short Account of that Part of Africa inhabited by the Negroes, etc." (anonymous, 1762); Anthony Benezet, "A Caution and Warning to Great Britain and Her Colonies, etc." (1767); Benjamin Rush's two short pamphlets denouncing the slave trade and the cruelty of some masters (1772); the resolutions of the American Quakers (in 1774 and 1776) excluding from membership all Quakers who engaged in the slave trade or who would not emancipate their slaves. Actually antislavery literature was written in America from the very beginning of the colonies. S. F. Poole (*Anti-Slavery Opinions in the Colonies before 1800* [1823], p. 41) says that, from 1619 on, such men as Samuel Sewall, George Keith, Samuel Hopkins, William Burling, Ralph Sandiford, Anthony Benezet, Benjamin Lay, and John Woolman all opposed slavery.

<sup>327</sup> *Writings*, I, 4. The English movement was older than the American. F. J. Klingberg (*The Anti-Slavery Movement in England*, Chap. II) traces the rise of the movement and says that the year 1763, which had been preceded by fifty years of stray condemnations, marks the beginning of organized opposition in England (p. 23). By court decisions emancipation was effected in England by the Somerset case (directed by Granville Sharp) in 1772 and in Scotland by the Knight case in 1778. Paine cites Dr. Ames, Baxter, Durham, Locke, Carmichael, Hutcheson, Montesquieu, Blackstone, Wallace, the Bishop of Gloucester, and others who wrote in Europe on the

ethical. He denounces slavery as no less culpable than "murder, robbery, lewdness, and barbarity," and asks that Americans immediately "discontinue and renounce it, with grief and abhorrence."<sup>328</sup> He condemns the scriptural argument for slavery as anti-Christian and says that, like the primitive Christians, it is "equally our duty while there is an Heathen nation" to spread the "Divine Religion."<sup>329</sup> All these arguments had been set forth many many times before in both England and America. Paine does not stop with a moral condemnation of slavery, but goes on to offer a definite plan for the actual abolition of American slavery. He urges that

prudent men, with the assistance of legislatures, determine what is practicable for masters, and best for them [the slaves]. Perhaps some could give them lands upon reasonable rent, some, employing them in their labor still, might give them some reasonable allowance for it; so as all may have some property, and fruits of their labors at their own disposal, and be encouraged to industry; the family may live together, and enjoy the natural satisfaction of exercising relative affections and duties, with civil protection, and other advantages, like fellow men.<sup>330</sup>

It is difficult to determine whether Paine really contributed anything new to the antislavery movement. The truth seems to be that many had condemned slavery on moral grounds and had taken definite steps toward the abolition of the African slave trade and the amelioration of the condition of the slaves,

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subject before him. To these would have to be added such names as Sharp, Wesley, Whitefield, Samuel Johnson, George Fox, Adam Smith, Jeremy Bentham, and others.

<sup>328</sup> *Writings*, I, 7, 8.

<sup>329</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 9.

<sup>330</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 8. A few weeks after Paine had written the essay, the first organized antislavery society in America was organized in Philadelphia. Paine was one of the members. See Conway, *Life*, I, 52.

but few, especially in America, went as far as Paine in advocating complete abolition at home.<sup>331</sup>

Later in the same year, 1775, in a short piece entitled "A Serious Thought,"<sup>332</sup> Paine predicts that the day is not far away when God's Providence will be visited upon the British Empire for its treatment of savage peoples. Especially is England culpable because ever since "the discovery of America she hath employed herself in that most horrid of all traffics, that of human flesh . . ." <sup>333</sup> And he looks forward to the day when God "shall have blest us, and made us a people *dependent only upon Him*, then may our gratitude be shown by an act of continental legislation, which shall put a stop to the importation of Negroes for sale, soften the hard fate of those already here, and in time procure their freedom."<sup>334</sup> Five years later Paine wrote the "Preamble to the Act Passed by the Pennsylvania Assembly, March 1, 1780,"<sup>335</sup> which prohibited negro slavery in that state.<sup>336</sup>

<sup>331</sup> Conway, in a preface to Paine's essay (*Writings*, I, 2), gives all the credit to Paine. The aim of Paine's predecessors in America, says Conway, was "to excite horror of the traffic in Africans abroad, but they did not propose to restrict the home traffic, much less to emancipate the slaves." Therefore, concludes Conway, "to Thomas Paine belongs the honor of being the first American abolitionist." This seems to be an over-statement when we consider that Franklin, Jefferson, Madison, Pinckney, Rush, Dwight, John Adams, Washington, Col. Humphreys, Barlow, and many others opposed slavery at this time. See Poole, *op. cit.*, *passim*. Jefferson himself had made an effort in the Legislature of Virginia to emancipate the slaves by government decree as early as 1769. See F. C. Prescott, *Hamilton and Jefferson* (1934), p. xlv.

<sup>332</sup> *Writings*, I, 65-66. It is supposed to be an anticipation of the Declaration of Independence.

<sup>333</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 65.

<sup>334</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 66.

<sup>335</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 29-30.

<sup>336</sup> Conway (*ibid.*, I, 3) says that this was "the first legislative measure of negro-emancipation in Christendom." Note, however, that emancipation took place in England (though by the ruling of a court) eight years previous to this.

## 2. *Social and National Security*

Probably the most significant aspect of Paine's humanitarianism is his attempt to secure some measure of social security for the mass of the people. In this he stands at the beginning of the movement which since has come to be the most important function of the modern state. By his time political rights had been pretty well secured, but the security of social rights *as a function of government* was still in the formative state.<sup>337</sup> Paine, however, by 1795 had formulated a fairly consistent, if rather crude and unpractical, system of social legislation. His scheme involves the elimination of gross property inequalities by abolishing such restrictions as the law of primogeniture and establishing an income tax, the liberalization of laws restricting the wages of labor, and a plan of state aids and pensions through income and other taxation.

Paine joined the widespread attack on the law of primogeniture<sup>338</sup> as a means of diminishing property inequalities. In England for various reasons, the rise of the new merchant capitalists eager for land, the rise of the industrial system, the revival of the enclosure after 1760, the domination of Parlia-

<sup>337</sup> Locke's essay *On Civil Government* (1690), for example, considers only political rights. Even where Locke attacks slavery (Book I, Chap. 3; Book II, Chap. 4), it is political right alone that he considers.

<sup>338</sup> Carl Brinkman (in the *Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*, XII, 404) says that "The attack on primogeniture was most fierce under the influence of the liberal individualism and the rationalistic egalitarianism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries . . ." On backgrounds see C. S. Kenny, *The History of the Law of Primogeniture in England* (1878) and Richard B. Morris, *Studies in the History of American Law* (Columbia University, Studies in History, Economics and Public Law, No. 316 [1930], especially Chap. II). By 1798, says Morris (p. 81), most of the states had abolished primogeniture. The movement was greatly encouraged by Jefferson's successful attack on the law in Virginia in 1776 (see Jefferson's *Writings*, H. A. Washington, ed., I, 43, 139). The custom was not wholly abolished in England until the passage of the Land Act in 1925.

ment by the landed interests, the revival of agriculture itself,<sup>339</sup> a movement was afoot in the last half of the 18th century in which the rich were rapidly becoming richer and the poor poorer. As a result the great mass of English workmen were transformed from small holders of land<sup>340</sup> into a rapidly increasing class of unpropertied factory and agricultural workers. To enlightened thinkers like Paine, seeking always for the equal and normal, the law of primogeniture had become the symbol of this movement, and they attacked it as unnatural in itself and inimical to society. The great landed estates, says Paine, have become a "matter of national concern." The law of primogeniture, which maintains them, "ought to be abolished, not only because it is unnatural and unjust, but because the country suffers by its operation."<sup>341</sup> As the system now operates, the younger children, deprived of their inheritance, are thrown on the public for maintenance,<sup>342</sup> "the freedom of elections" are violated by the overbearing influence of the "monopoly of family property,"<sup>343</sup> and a large part of the national domain is rendered unproductive by being devoted to parks and chases "at a time when the annual production of

<sup>339</sup> See F. A. Ogg and W. R. Sharp (*Economic Development of Modern Europe* [1926], pp. 120-125), who discuss the movement and its causes at length.

<sup>340</sup> D. G. Barnes (*A History of the English Corn Laws from 1660-1846* [1930], p. 113) says that the small landowner "had chiefly disappeared by 1780-86."

<sup>341</sup> *Writings*, II, 500.

<sup>342</sup> "The peer and the beggar are often of the same family. One extreme produces the other: to make one rich many must be made poor" (*idem*).

<sup>343</sup> Lord Morley in his *Life of Cobden* (Chap. VII) estimates that even after the Reform Act of 1832, and until as late as 1846, four-fifths of the House of Commons represented the landowning class (quoted from Ogg and Sharp, *op. cit.*, pp. 120-1). Note that in *Agrarian Justice* Paine inverts the argument that suffrage should be based on property. There he argues that every individual has a natural right to the landed property of the world and that since property at present is a qualification for suffrage, therefore all men should have the vote because they all own property.

grain is not equal to the national consumption."<sup>344</sup> Paine's solution is "a progressive tax, operating to extirpate the unjust and unnatural law of primogeniture, and the vicious influence of the aristocratical system."<sup>345</sup> Paine's stand on the income tax antedates by thirty-five years any serious consideration of the tax as a definite policy of government finance.<sup>346</sup> It is true that England enacted a war income tax in 1798 which ran until 1816, but it did not have for its purpose the elimination of property inequalities. In *Agrarian Justice* Paine carried his plan one step further and now plans to levy an inheritance tax "at the moment that property is passing by the death of one person to the possession of another."<sup>347</sup> It is significant that Paine subjects to taxation both land (natural property) and personal property. Every man has a right to share the natural property. Paine adds, however, that "personal property is the *effect of society*." Therefore, the individual owes "a part of that accumulation back again to society from whence the whole came."<sup>348</sup> The inheritance tax itself, unlike the

<sup>344</sup> Paine gives as his authority the Reports on the Corn Trade (*Writings*, II, 500). Actually the scarcity of grain in these years was due to a number of other causes. Barnes (*op. cit.*, pp. 113-114) discusses the relation of the Enclosure to the Corn Laws. Note, however, Arthur Young's *Inquiry into the Propriety of Applying Wastes to the Better Support and Maintenance of the Poor* (1801).

<sup>345</sup> *Writings*, II, 502. See also II, 498: The "chief object of this progressive tax (besides the justice of rendering taxes more equal than they are) is . . . to extirpate the unnatural law of primogeniture . . ."

<sup>346</sup> E. R. A. Seligman in *The Income Tax* (1914), the authoritative book on the subject, shows (pp. 116 ff.) that it was not until after 1830 that any serious thought was given to the income tax as a possible permanent source of government finance. On the background of the tax in Paine's time, see pp. 82-89.

<sup>347</sup> *Writings*, III, 333.

<sup>348</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 340. It is out of such a view as Paine's that the modern view of the tax, *i.e.*, as simply a tax levied by the state's inherent taxing power, has grown. Other early theories as to the right to institute such a tax are those of Bentham (merely the state's right to regulate property), on the one hand, and of Münzinger, Bluntschli,

income tax, was a common form of taxation long before Paine's day. His chief contribution, however, was, as we shall see, the social purpose for which he wished to expend his income and inheritance taxes.

The second step in Paine's plan of social security for the masses is his desire to improve the status of the laboring classes. Though he does not in general have much to say on the subject, yet in what he does say, he reveals clearly where he stands. His first important pamphlet, "The Case of the Officers of the Excise" (1772), is an attempt to show that low wages are the cause of corrupt excisemen. "Poverty, in Defiance of Principle, begets a Degree of Meanness that will stoop to almost anything."<sup>349</sup> But it is not until the Second Part of *Rights of Man* and *Agrarian Justice* that Paine makes his really significant statements. The two most oppressive laws which at this time were rapidly pushing the great mass of English labor into a state of hopeless and servile poverty were the Quarter Sessions Assessment and the Law of Settlement. By the first wages "were to be settled each year by the justices of the peace in each county, and no employer must give and no workman ask for more than the established rate of wages."<sup>350</sup> Paine attacks these laws "regulating and limiting workmen's wages." Why not leave the laborers as "free to make their own bar-

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Wagner, and Ely (the state is a feudal lord which inherits part of its vassal's property), on the other. See W. J. Shultz, *Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*, VIII, 43-48.

<sup>349</sup> British Museum Copy, p. 15. Paine was chosen by the excisemen to address Parliament in their behalf. He spent the winter of 1772-73 trying to influence members of Parliament. Later in 1792 (*Writings*, II, 503), he refers again to the "condition of the inferior revenue-officers."

<sup>350</sup> E. P. Cheyney, *A Short History of England* (1918), p. 338. The law in force until 1814 was an old law enacted in 1563. On general backgrounds an authoritative, though one-sided work, is J. E. Thorold Rogers, *Six Centuries of Work and Wages: The History of English Labour* (1884). See Chaps. XIV-XVII, but especially pp. 433-441.

gains, as the lawmakers are to let their farms and houses?<sup>351</sup> Personal labor is all the property they have. Why is that little, and the little freedom they enjoy, to be infringed?"<sup>352</sup> He goes on to point out that while the legal wages of the worker are fixed, no laws are made to regulate the prices of commodities which the laborer must buy.<sup>353</sup> With the rapid rise in prices this situation had become so bad in 1795 that laborers had to be given poor relief from the government in order to subsist.<sup>354</sup> When Paine wrote *Agrarian Justice* in 1795-1796, he subjected personal property as well as land (natural property) to his inheritance tax because, he says, the "accumulation of personal property is, in many instances, the effect of paying too little for the labor that produced it; the consequence of which is, that the working hand perishes in old age, and the employer abounds in affluence."<sup>355</sup> The second law, the Law of Settlement, which was not repealed until 1834, provided that when the lower classes moved from one parish to another in search of work, they were liable to be returned

<sup>351</sup> Paine is entirely right in identifying the lawmakers with the employers of labor and the owners of land. See above, and Rogers, *op. cit.*, Chap. XVII.

<sup>352</sup> *Writings*, II, 501.

<sup>353</sup> "Real wages were particularly low in the eighteenth century because of a steep rise in commodity prices accompanied by only a mild increase in money wages" (*Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*, XV, 306). Rogers (*op. cit.*, p. 407) says that in 1745 wheat was "between 21s. and 22s. the quarter; after 1780, it was rarely below 50s.; and towards the end of the century it rose to double that price." See the whole of his Chap. XIV, pp. 387-413, "Wages of Labour after the Rise in Prices."

<sup>354</sup> To be "frequently in receipt of Poor Relief was, for forty years between 1795 and 1834 the lot of nearly every farm labourer in southern England" (S. and B. Webb, *English Local Government: English Poor Law History: Part I* [1927], p. 344).

<sup>355</sup> *Writings*, III, 340. Cf. also John Woolman (Everyman's Library), p. 221, "If a Man successful in Business expends Part of his Income in Things of no real Use, while the Poor employed by him pass through great Difficulties in getting the Necessaries of Life, this requires his serious Attention."

to the parish "from which they had come, for fear their support would fall on the parish in which they wished to settle."<sup>356</sup> Paine wishes to substitute for this despicable law his new fund (raised by taxing the rich) in order that the "dying poor will not be dragged from place to place to breathe their last, as a reprisal of parish upon parish."<sup>357</sup> Thus, we may say, that on the question of labor Paine may be considered a predecessor of the great nineteenth-century labor reform movement which was soon to follow.

The last step in Paine's social security scheme is an elaborate system of state aids and pensions at all the critical periods in the lives of the masses. He attacked the existing system of state charity under which there was "a constant increase in the number and wretchedness of the poor, and in the amount of the poor-rates."<sup>358</sup> Paine often has a poignant sense of the evils of poverty which could only come from first-hand observation. Under his own plan, he says, the "hearts of the humane will not be shocked by ragged and hungry children, and persons of seventy and eighty years of age, begging in the streets."<sup>359</sup> In the *Rights of Man*<sup>360</sup> he says his plan includes, besides the abolition of present poor rates, state aid for the poor, the education of children,<sup>361</sup> pensions for the aged, donations for births and marriages, funeral expenses for laborers

<sup>356</sup> Cheyney, *op. cit.*, p. 630. The law also provided for many other restrictions on the removal of workers from place to place. It was really a survival of medieval serfdom which wished to fix the laborer to the soil. It was not abolished until the new industrialists added their voices to the protests of labor. The original act had been enacted in 1662. See S. and B. Webb, *op. cit.*, p. 314 ff.

<sup>357</sup> *Writings*, II, 493. It is significant too that one of the expenditures which Paine wishes to make from his fund is an allowance for the expenses of funerals of persons traveling for work and dying away from home.

<sup>358</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 469.

<sup>359</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 493.

<sup>360</sup> See *Ibid.*, II, 493, for the list.

<sup>361</sup> For Paine's theories of education see Section V, following.

dying away from home, and employment for the casual poor in London and Westminster.<sup>362</sup> By his statistics on taxation Paine pointed out that "the lives of one hundred and forty thousand aged persons" could be rendered comfortable by the "million a year of public money" expended on the King.<sup>363</sup> He carries the plan further in *Agrarian Justice*, to whose title he had affixed the statement that it was a plan for meliorating the condition of men by creating in every nation a national fund, to pay every person when arrived at the age of 21 years, the sum of fifteen pounds, to enable him or her to begin the world. And also, ten pounds per annum.

Another reform in which Paine was interested in his early days in America was the abolition of dueling.<sup>364</sup> For various reasons the practice which had lapsed in the early days of the colonies underwent a recrudescence in the Revolutionary period.<sup>365</sup> Paine justly looked on it as an evil hang-over of an uncouth, uncivilized age. It is "Gothic and absurd," yet he

<sup>362</sup> For other lists of Paine's humanitarian projects see *Writings*, II, 501-502; III, 56, 67; Rickman, *op. cit.*, pp. 14-15; P. A. Brown, *The French Revolution in England* (London, 1918), p. 202.

<sup>363</sup> *Writings*, II, 489.

<sup>364</sup> On general backgrounds the best works are D. C. Seitz, *Famous American Duels* (1929), Chaps. I and II, and especially E. B. Greene, "The Code of Honor in Colonial and Revolutionary Times, with Special Reference to New England" in Colonial Society of Massachusetts, *Publications*, XXVI (1925), 367-388.

<sup>365</sup> Greene (*op. cit.*, p. 376) says it was "natural enough that the Revolutionary era should be marked by a considerable increase in dueling." The reasons are (1) the intercolonial wars in the mid-eighteenth century; (2) the increase of royal forces in the colonies; (3) the large number of young men, especially of the South, sent abroad to be educated in the European code of honor; (4) the large number of foreign officers in the colonial army forced the colonial officers to maintain the code. Says (p. 380) that Lafayette once challenged the British peace commissioner, the Earl of Carlisle, to a duel, but that Washington stopped the match by suggesting that Lafayette's chivalric ideas were out of date. In England (p. 369) dueling had become so prevalent in this period that by 1780 it was endangering the freedom of debate on the floor of Parliament.

notes that many defend it "on principle" as a mode of settling differences where the law does not apply.<sup>366</sup> Robertson, the historian, had defended the practice in the time of Charles V on the notion that the effect of its "gentleness" on modern manners was beneficial to mankind.<sup>367</sup> Paine replies that it was only "the spirit of chivalry and romantic knighthood still prevailing in those fighting times" of Charles V which caused it to last so long.<sup>368</sup> He does not offer a solution for dueling. It is a "melancholy truth," he said, that more strenuous laws have not stopped the practice. Neither have well-established religious systems prevented it, for it is in such countries that it is most peculiarly prevalent. Since it was a survival of the "Gothic" ages, Paine probably felt that only when the general mind had become more enlightened, only when reason had come to prevail, would the practice die a natural death.

The movement to abolish the death penalty in the last quarter of the century also found in Paine one of its early advocates.<sup>369</sup> To the crusading humanitarians of the Enlightenment the medieval system of punishment, especially the death penalty, exemplified gothic barbarism at its worst.<sup>370</sup> Beccaria's *Dei delitti e delle pene*<sup>371</sup> in 1764 was a reasoned protest

<sup>366</sup> *Writings*, I, 40.

<sup>367</sup> See *Reign of Emperor Charles V*, Book V.

<sup>368</sup> *Writings*, I, 42.

<sup>369</sup> For general backgrounds see Coleman Phillipson, *Three Criminal Law Reformers: Beccaria, Bentham, Romilly* (1923) and Raymond T. Bye, *Capital Punishment in the United States* (1919), especially pp. 1-9.

<sup>370</sup> The 18th-century critics of capital punishment were entirely justified by facts as to the genuine wickedness of the practice, though they were wrong in attributing it wholly to the medieval era. The death penalty did not attain its greatest use until it became a political instrument of the national states. Bye (*op. cit.*, p. 2) says an estimate shows "that in the twenty years reign of Henry VIII, 72,000 executions took place." Even as late as 1780 (p. 1) "the Penal Code of England embraced 240 capital offences."

<sup>371</sup> Paine could hardly have escaped coming in contact with Beccaria's work which, together with Voltaire's *Commentary*, was trans-

against the medieval system of wholesale execution and marks the beginning of a movement which later led to the great penal and prison reforms of nineteenth-century England. Though the system of capital punishment was brought to America in a much abbreviated form,<sup>372</sup> yet as early as 1780 Paine's co-religionists, the Pennsylvania Quakers, were agitating for the abolition of the remnant that remained.<sup>373</sup> Paine looked on capital punishment mainly as an instrument of monarchical government.<sup>374</sup> Since monarchy, however, was a corrupt medieval institution, Paine saw in the French Revolution the means to abolish both monarchy and capital punishment. As France "has been the first of the European nations to abolish royalty," he said, "let her also be the first to abolish the punishment of death, and to find out a milder and more effectual substitute."<sup>375</sup> In 1793 in the French Assembly Paine twice opposed the execution of Louis XVI. Marat accused Paine of opposing the execution because he was a Quaker, and Paine replied that he opposed it from both "moral motives and motives of public policy."<sup>376</sup> At any rate Paine must be given credit for his sincerity, since it led to his unpopularity and imprisonment.

lated into English in 1768. Phillipson (*op. cit.*, pp. 11, 99) thinks the influence of Beccaria in America began immediately after the Revolution.

<sup>372</sup> Puritan Massachusetts recognized only twelve capital crimes. See *Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*, III, 192-195.

<sup>373</sup> The penal code of William Penn had been outlawed at the time of Queen Anne. The American Quakers, however, were free to agitate, and from the establishment of the Pennsylvania constitution in 1780 to 1794 succeeded in limiting capital punishment in that state to first degree murder.

<sup>374</sup> "Monarchy, in France, was a system pregnant with crime and murder . . ." (*Writings*, III, 123).

<sup>375</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 124.

<sup>376</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 125, 127. On the possible Quaker source for Paine's opposition to capital punishment, see Conway, *Life*, I, 306. Conway, *ibid.*, II, 15-16, gives too much credit to Paine and the Quakers as the originators of the movement against the practice. Most of the

Early in the 1780's Paine joined in the crusade to establish copyright laws in America.<sup>377</sup> A pirated, inaccurate edition of the Abbé Raynal's *Revolution in America* in 1782 led Paine to attack the lawless state of the publishing business. Just as he put great emphasis on the natural political rights of the individual, so he put equal emphasis on the natural literary rights of the author. "A man's opinions, whether written or in thought, are his own," he said, "until he pleases to publish them himself . . ."<sup>378</sup> But the copyright will do more than establish the rights of the author, it will establish the literary and intellectual independence of the nation. Literature can never flourish in a country unless "the works of an author are his legal property"; to treat "letters in any other light than this, is to banish them from the country, or to strangle them in birth."<sup>379</sup> Paine sees in the copyright the solution:

The state of literature in America must one day become a subject of legislative consideration. Hitherto it has been a dis-enlightened thinkers after Beccaria opposed capital punishment before Paine—Rousseau, Voltaire, Kant, Condorcet, Marat (who wrote a book opposing the practice in 1789), Robespierre, Manuel, and others. In America Benjamin Rush on March 9, 1787, read a paper, "An Inquiry into the Effects of Public Punishments upon Criminals and upon Society," before the Society for Promoting Political Enquiries which convened for the occasion at the home of Franklin. Rush bases his philosophical argument on Hutcheson's belief in a moral faculty and takes his facts from John Howard's *The State of Prisons in England and Wales* (1777). Paine belonged to the Society and may have heard the paper before leaving for Europe a few weeks later.

<sup>377</sup>On the history of the copyright, see Thorvald Solberg, "International Copyright in the Congress of the United States" in *Essays Offered to Herbert Putnam* (1929), ed. by W. W. Bishop and A. Keogh, and R. R. Bowker, *Copyright, Its History and Its Laws* (1912), especially Chap. IV.

<sup>378</sup>*Ibid.*, II, 68. This is a striking instance of Paine's foresight. Maine in *Popular Government* (pp. 131-132, 247) many years later attributed the "intellectual sterility" of America to the same cause—"the long refusal of Congress to grant an international copyright. The want of such copyright effectually crushed American author-

<sup>379</sup>*Writings*, II, 69.

interested volunteer in the service of the revolution, and no man thought of profits: but when peace shall give time and opportunity for study, the country will deprive itself of the honor and service of letters and the improvement of science, unless sufficient laws are made to prevent depredations of literary property.<sup>380</sup>

When Paine wrote these words in 1782, no copyright laws whatever existed in America. Until the establishment of the Constitution in 1787, Congress had had no power to act. A recommendation from Congress, however, combined with "a vigorous copyright crusade by Noah Webster, who traveled from capital to capital,"<sup>381</sup> led all the states but one to pass copyright laws between 1783 and 1786.<sup>382</sup> Though Paine cannot be said to have had an important part in the enactment of this legislation, yet he very clearly saw the literary consequences of lax copyright laws.

Paine's last and, to the modern reader, most relevant reform is his advocacy of disarmament and an international association of nations.<sup>383</sup> He toys with both ideas as early as *The*

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ship in the home market by the competition of the unpaid and appropriated works of British authors . . . a literary servitude unparalleled in the history of thought."

<sup>380</sup> *Writings*, II, 69, note.

<sup>381</sup> Bowker, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

<sup>382</sup> The first Congressional act was passed in 1790. America, however, has continued to be very lax about copyright. Over a hundred years was to elapse before any foreigner could acquire a copyright under the Act of 1891. Even as late as 1929 Solberg (*op. cit.*, p. 422) could say that "as regards international copyright the United States occupies an undignified and criticized position."

<sup>383</sup> Paine was one of the earliest but not the first to advocate an international association of nations. William Penn had formulated such a plan and the "pacific federation" of Rousseau and Saint-Pierre is said to have influenced to some extent the Holy Alliance. Paine's ideas on internationalism seem to have arisen from a sense of common interests within the rising commercial class in the Enlightenment. For backgrounds see Elizabeth York, *Leagues of Nations*, (1919); H. N. Brailsford, *Olives of Endless Age* (1928); and H. A. Gibbons, *Nationalism and Determinism* (1930).

*Rights of Man*, where he has a vision of the American and French Revolutions resulting in a world federation of nations. At the end of Part I he says that in a world of turmoil like the present "nothing of reform in the political world ought to be held improbable" and that, as a result, the system of war and intrigue in the European courts "may provoke a confederation of Nations to abolish it."<sup>384</sup> Again in Part II, in the chapter on "Ways and Means of Improving the Condition of Europe," he says that a subject of such "equatorial magnitude" embraces "the whole region of humanity" and "blends the individual, the nation, and the world."<sup>385</sup> In the same passage he gives some reasons for the need of international association and disarmament. The wretchedness of Europe, he says, "lies not in any natural defect in the principles of civilization, but in preventing those principles having a universal operation." The result is a "barbarous system" in which nations spend their energies in war "like so many individuals in a state of nature."<sup>386</sup> And the consequence of this is that, whereas the national governments waste millions in war, the civil governments have "scarcely a fortieth" part of the taxes collected to devote to humanitarian improvements.<sup>387</sup> All this, says Paine, is highly irrational. Nature has distributed the materials of manufactures and commerce "in various and distant parts of a nation and of the world," and since "they cannot be procured by war so cheaply . . . as by commerce, she has rendered the latter the means of extirpating the former."<sup>388</sup> On this basis he suggests, near the end of *Rights of Man*, his first proposal for naval disarmament: an "alliance" of all the navies of Europe, in which no power will build any "new ship of war" and all navies will be reduced to "one tenth of their present force." In connection with this proposal all new territories in the new conti-

<sup>384</sup> *Writings*, II, 389.

<sup>385</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 454.

<sup>386</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 455.

<sup>387</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 455-456.

<sup>388</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 457.

nents are to be opened "to the general commerce of the world."<sup>389</sup>

Paine referred to these proposals again in "The Eighteenth Fructidor," his address to the French people in 1797,<sup>390</sup> and in the next year he formulated both his ideas on disarmament and a league of nations into a definite pact which was submitted to Talleyrand in 1798 and to all the Ministers of Foreign Affairs in Europe in 1800.<sup>391</sup> The proposal was entitled a "Maritime Compact," "*an Unarmed Association of Nations for the protection of the Rights and Commerce of Nations that shall be neutral in time of War.*"<sup>392</sup> The association was to have a president and a congress, a common flag, and was to enforce its demands by economic sanctions.

This is the end and high-water mark of Paine's humanitarianism. A lyrical passage in the last paragraph of *Rights of Man* indicates a vision of the reform movement as inevitable, coming like the swelling of buds in the spring.

## V. EDUCATION

The basic source of all Paine's hopes for a better world is his faith in education, the free play of reason, and enlightenment, not only as a utilitarian tool but also as the means of revealing to mankind God's majesty in nature and his beneficence, the imitation of which would draw men of all nations into brotherly unity.

<sup>389</sup> *Writings*, II, 511. It is interesting today to note his prophecy in 1792 of "the independence of South America, and the opening of those countries of immense extent and wealth to the general commerce of the world."

<sup>390</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 366-367. Commerce contains within itself "an unarmed neutrality."

<sup>391</sup> See Conway's notes in *ibid.*, III, pp. 367, 418-420, giving the history of the proposal. Paine published the final text of his proposal in No. VII of his *Letters to American Citizens* in 1803.

<sup>392</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 421.

Paine was proud of his own success at self-education.<sup>393</sup> At the age of twenty, as we have seen, he had learned a great deal about Newtonianism and its broader implications from "the philosophical lectures of Martin and Ferguson," and from Dr. Bevis, "an excellent astronomer."<sup>394</sup> He had been teaching school when Benjamin Franklin,<sup>395</sup> himself an impassioned apostle of enlightenment, discovered him in 1774. Paine, however, looked upon education as a lifelong process, and he made the most of his great opportunities of association with men like Franklin, Rittenhouse, Rush, Jefferson in America; Godwin, Holcroft, Barlow, Rickman, Horne Tooke, and Hardy in England; and Condorcet, Lafayette, Brissot, and others in France. "As to the learning that any person gains from school education," he exclaims, "it serves only, like a small capital, to put him in a way of beginning himself afterward. Every person of learning is finally his own teacher."<sup>396</sup> He said that the more important books of antiquity being available in translations, we could transcend them by including them in our up-to-date knowledge of science.

A child of the Enlightenment, Paine insists that "all the knowledge man has of science . . . comes from [the unwearied observation of] the great machine and structure of the universe."<sup>397</sup> The scientist, in studying the laws of nature created by God, is thus thinking God's thoughts after him and coming into reverent kinship with God. This is the fountainhead of truth, toward which all sincere thinking naturally tends. Thus

<sup>393</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 62.

<sup>394</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 63.

<sup>395</sup> See the chapter on educational views in the introduction to *Franklin* (New York, 1935) by F. L. Mott and C. E. Jorgenson, together with the bibliographical items they cite. A. O. Hansen, *Liberalism in American Education in the Eighteenth Century* (New York, 1926), provides useful orientation, with emphasis on perfectibility and the idea of progress.

<sup>396</sup> *Writings*, IV, 64.

<sup>397</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 193.

we can understand, perhaps, how Paine, in common with many rationalists of his age, came to make a religious dogma of the conviction that "when opinions are free, either in matters of government or religion, truth will finally and powerfully prevail."<sup>398</sup> Conversely, he believed that hitherto the lack of progress in the amelioration of humanity's lot had been caused by the tendency of church and state, Catholic or Established Church and monarchy, to thwart the free play of scientific knowledge and the fearless debating of all issues in the light of reason alone. He points to the persecution of scientists such as Galileo by the church, and its various attempts to ban knowledge as in the case of Diderot's *La Grande Encyclopédie*. As "priestcraft was always the enemy of knowledge, because priestcraft supports itself by keeping people in delusion and ignorance, it was consistent with its policy to make the acquisition of knowledge a real sin."<sup>399</sup> But Paine not only attacks Catholicism and monarchy as enemies of the free play of ideas; he attacks also the study of languages and urges a sharp shift in the subject matter of education to science and the study of nature, religiously considered. "It would . . . be advantageous to the state of learning to abolish the study of the dead languages, and to make learning consist, as it originally did, in scientific knowledge." Paine's chapters on education in *The Age of Reason* and his Discourse to the Theophilanthropists entitled "The Existence of God" are among the most glamorous glorifications we have of the study of science as a divine subject as opposed to the study of language and theology embalmed in books.<sup>400</sup>

Before going into this aspect of Paine's theory, however, it

<sup>398</sup> *Writings*, IV, 195.

<sup>399</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 319. See the whole discussion in *Prospect Papers*, and Lynn Thorndike, "L'Encyclopédie and the History of Science," *Isis*, VI, 361 ff. (1924).

<sup>400</sup> *Writings*, III, 57. See the whole discussion, *ibid.*, IV, 50-64, 236-246.

is necessary to note that he did not, as is usually thought, reject all past experience. A too "great inattention to past occurrences," he said, "retards and bewilders our judgment in everything, while, on the contrary, by comparing what is past with what is present, we frequently hit on the true character of both and become wise with very little trouble. It is a kind of countermarch by which we get into the rear of time, and mark the movements and meanings of things as we make our return."<sup>401</sup> Paine expressed, as we have seen,<sup>402</sup> a high regard for two ancient traditions, the Eastern and the Classical—though he utterly rejected any tradition tainted with medieval authority. The reason, of course, is not hard to discover. In Paine's eyes, as in the eyes of all the Enlightenment, these ancients, living prior to Christianity and the Dark Ages, did not have their reason corrupted by a degenerate tradition and hence were able to discover a large measure of truth from the natural order of the world. In the teachings of Zoroaster and the ancient Egyptian allegorists he saw, through the eyes of Henry Lord and Sir William Smith as well as through the historians of Freemasonry, the original uncorrupted worship of a divine revelation in nature, centering in the sun. His chief interest, however, was in the "classical" ancients of whom he knew considerably more than has usually been suspected. He did not know the classic languages, but he read much in translation. "Though I went to the grammar school," he said, "I

<sup>401</sup>*Ibid.*, I, 197. It is well to remember, however, that if Paine rejected the servile study of the past as a complete ethical guide, he may be considered as one of the early exponents of critical historical study. He thought that a historical "society for inquiring into the ancient state of the world and the state of ancient history, so far as history is connected with systems of religion ancient and modern, may be a useful and instructive institution" (*ibid.*, IV, 331). He was a contemporary of the historian Gibbon, critical of early Christianity; and in his critical self-reliant spirit and stress on science and rationalism, Paine foreshadowed modern critical practitioners of intellectual historiography such as James Harvey Robinson.

<sup>402</sup>See section on religion, pp. xxvii–xxxii above.

did not learn Latin, not only because I had no inclination to learn the languages, but because of the objection the Quakers have against the books in which the language is taught. But this did not prevent me from being acquainted with the subjects of all the Latin books used in the school."<sup>403</sup> Paine's claim is borne out by the many references to the classics in his work. With Cicero, Tacitus, Homer, Plato, Aristotle, Aesop, Thucydides, Pericles, Scipio, Camillus, Aristides, Epaminondas, Plutarch, Xenophon, and Democritus he shows some degree of familiarity. In Periclean Athens, he says, he saw more to admire and less to condemn in that great extraordinary people than in anything which history affords.<sup>404</sup> Like Montesquieu, he could think of no higher hope for his beloved America, than that embodied in his prophecy that "what Athens was in miniature, America will be in magnitude. The one was the wonder of the ancient world; the other is becoming the admiration of the present."<sup>405</sup>

In spite of his high praise of ancient civilization, Paine was convinced of its inferiority when compared to the present. "We do great injustice to ourselves" by supposing "ourselves inferior" to Greece and Rome. "I have no notion of yielding the palm of the United States to any Grecians or Romans that were ever born."<sup>406</sup> That being the case, and the valuable contributions of the Greeks to science being translated, Paine urged a crucial shift in the subject matter of education from letters to science, from the study of man to the study of nature.<sup>407</sup>

<sup>403</sup> *Writings*, IV, 62-63.

<sup>404</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 56, 61.

<sup>405</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 424.

<sup>406</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 252-253.

<sup>407</sup> Franklin, Jefferson, Hopkinson, and Rush were all advocating a similar shift. In his "Observations upon the Study of the Latin and Greek Languages" (1789), Rush contended that as long as science had to be approached through Latin and Greek, education would "always be confined to a few people. But it is only by rendering knowledge universal, that a republican form of government

The chief motive for Paine's emphasis on science as the subject matter of education was religious. He concluded *The Age of Reason* with the conviction that "we can know God only through His works," through Nature and Science.<sup>408</sup> In contrast to the study of theology in books of opinion which "has often produced . . . the numerous persecutions, the fanatical quarrels, the religious burnings and massacres, that have desolated Europe," Paine notes that the "mind becomes at once enlightened and serene" and the "social faculties become enlarged" when man looks "through the works of the creation to the Creator himself,"<sup>409</sup> for "the Almighty is the great mechanic of the creation; the first philosopher and original teacher of all science."<sup>410</sup> Paine takes particular care to warn that astronomy, the queen of the sciences, will lead to atheism if taught "as accomplishments only."<sup>411</sup> Instead it "should be taught theologically" in a series of lectures which would "render theology the most delightful and entertaining of all studies."<sup>412</sup> He would therefore convert every "house of devotion into a school of science," dedicated to teaching her "immutable laws."<sup>413</sup> For "all the principles of science are of divine origin. Man cannot make, or invent, or contrive principles; he can only discover them; and he ought to look through the discovery to the author."<sup>414</sup> "Every part of science, whether connected with the geometry of the universe, with the systems of animal or vegetable life, or with the properties of inanimate matter, is a text as well for devotion as for philosophy—for gratitude, as for human improvement."<sup>415</sup> For humanitarian uses, sci-

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can be preserved in our country." He argued further that since we occupy a new country, our "principal business should be to explore and apply its resources." See also John Trumbull's attack on classical study in *The Progress of Dulness* (1772).

<sup>408</sup> *Writings*, IV, 191.

<sup>410</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 193.

<sup>412</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 246.

<sup>414</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 239.

<sup>409</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 239-240.

<sup>411</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 239.

<sup>413</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 194.

<sup>415</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 194.

ence is, he says, "a continual source of tranquil pleasure" which is capable of accompanying "the mind all the way through life," making one "happy in old age," while a life of mere sensuality or greed eventually leads to misery.<sup>416</sup> He cites Franklin as an example of how the study of science develops a mind which "becomes at once enlightened and serene, a copy of the scene it beholds: information and adoration go hand in hand; and all the social faculties become enlarged."<sup>417</sup>

This brings us to the practical application of Paine's theory of education and knowledge of political matters. The important point to keep clearly in mind is that, like Jefferson,<sup>418</sup> Paine insisted that his faith in democracy, in the ability of the people to operate their own government for their own good, as being superior to monarchy, depended squarely upon his faith that the people could be educated, could acquire the knowledge of political affairs and political needs which he deemed essential. "Sovereign power without sovereign knowledge," he says, "that is, a full knowledge of all the matters over which that power is to be exercised, is a something which contradicts itself."<sup>419</sup> Like the great author of *Areopagitica*, Paine has a passionate conviction that where there was freedom to debate all aspects of a given question in the light of complete knowledge, it would be instinctive for men to accept what was true. It is on this basis that he justifies his reliance on the majority. For "it will sometimes happen," he admits, "that the minority are

<sup>416</sup> *Writings*, IV, 128.

<sup>417</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 239; see also p. 460.

<sup>418</sup> Jefferson (*Works*, ed. Bergh, XIII, 401) said that the people in America were so well informed that they "may safely and advantageously reserve to themselves a wholesome control over their public affairs and a degree of freedom, which in the hands of the *canaille* of the cities of Europe, would be instantly perverted to the demolition of everything public and private." See C. F. Arrowood, *Thomas Jefferson and Education in a Republic* (1930), and R. J. Honeywell, *The Educational Work of Thomas Jefferson* (1931).

<sup>419</sup> *Writings*, II, 135.

right, and the majority are wrong, but as soon as experience proves this to be the case, the minority will increase to a majority, and the error will reform itself by the tranquil operation of freedom of opinion and equality of rights."<sup>420</sup> Thus knowledge was indispensable: "Be . . . the reform to be accomplished whatever it may, it can only follow in consequence of obtaining a full knowledge of all the causes that have rendered such reform necessary, and everything short of this is guess-work or frivolous cunning."<sup>421</sup>

With the new thought and the deification of the human reason, it was natural that education should come to play a role which it had hitherto not known both as to scope and content. With freedom of opinion and debate guaranteed by good government, scientific education would enlighten man as to the true religion and also by inventions further his worldly success. We have already seen how he thought that the knowledge of the laws of nature would unite mankind in belief in the broad and basic principles of a universal and humane religion. If at times Paine appears to be primitivistic, it is important to remember that he recognizes that "the natural state is without those advantages which flow from agriculture, arts, science, and manufacturing," and that he thought these could be continually improved by utilitarian education and invention.<sup>422</sup> He insisted that "one good schoolmaster is of more use than a hundred priests":<sup>423</sup> science, and the ideas associated with it, when disseminated by education, will promote world brotherhood. There is impressive evidence that his own writing served as the "lodestar" and the text in the vast "School of Political Knowledge" represented by the multitude of Democratic-Republican Societies formed by the common people of his age to promote the brotherhood of man by peaceful means and by adult

<sup>420</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 274.

<sup>421</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 86.

<sup>422</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 328; also I, 20 ff.

<sup>423</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 252.

education.<sup>424</sup> Not only the scope, however, but the content of education was affected by the new emphasis on human reason. The deductive system of scholastic education dependent on authority and classical tradition necessarily, under the new conception of the human reason, had to give way to a scientific content and the inductive method intent on discovering new truths, religious and utilitarian, and the means of communicating them.

## VI. LITERARY THEORY AND PRACTICE

Let us now turn to Paine's literary theory and practice. Scholars agree that the key to his importance lies not in his ideas, common in his era, but in his great "mastery of the art of popular persuasion."<sup>425</sup> As a perfectibilian rationalist, confident that men's conduct is merely the externalization of opinion, Paine held that the chief means of changing opinion and so reforming the world was writing, which he accordingly exalted. By "letters, the tongue of the world," a man may command "a scene as vast as the world. . . . Jesus Christ and his apostles could not do this."<sup>426</sup> Some light is cast on the truth of the current notion that Paine was an economic determinist by his categorical statement that the French Revolution was "no more than the consequence of a mental revolution priorly existing in France" engendered by "the writings of the

<sup>424</sup> See E. P. Link's Columbia dissertation, *Republican-Democratic Societies, 1790-1800* (New York, 1942), pp. 109, 156-174; R. Birley, *The English Jacobins* (Oxford, 1924).

<sup>425</sup> C. E. Merriam, *Political Science Quarterly*, XIV, 402. Of course contemporary economic distress made people attentive to writing embodying suggestions for relief. But since Paine's ideas were available in dozens of books and pamphlets by others, the enormous demand for his own writings must be ascribed not so much to *what* he said as to *how* he said it.

<sup>426</sup> *Writings*, II, 103; IV, 287. See also *ibid.*, I, 16. He said that "one philosopher though a heathen" was of "more use" than all the "conquerors that ever existed."

French philosophers.”<sup>427</sup> Naturally, therefore, Paine thought with considerable care regarding the principles which underlie effective writing as a means of inculcating ideas. What were these principles, these literary theories, which enabled him to exert, as Franklin and Washington said, a “prodigious”<sup>428</sup> influence in “working a change in the minds of many men”?<sup>429</sup> His theory is valuable because, whatever one may think of other fine-sounding and untried theories hatched in a scholar’s study, Paine’s theory actually bore the fruit of success in the fiery “times that try men’s souls.”

From scattered sources evidence has been collected<sup>430</sup> which defines seven of Paine’s literary theories and aims. First, he sought candor, simplicity, and clarity. He would “rid our ideas of all superfluous words, and consider them in their natural bareness and simplicity.”<sup>431</sup> “I speak a language full and intelligible,” he remarks, in summing up his writing on “every subject.” “I deal not in hints and intimations. I have several reasons for this: First, that I may be clearly understood. Secondly, that it may be seen I am in earnest; and, thirdly, because it is an affront to truth to treat falsehood with complaisance.”<sup>432</sup>

<sup>427</sup> See *ibid.*, II, 333–334. Although Paine corrected some of Raynal’s errors of fact, he said that Raynal “displays great powers of genius, and is a master of style and language” (*Writings*, II, 79).

<sup>428</sup> *Writings of Benjamin Franklin* (ed. Smyth, IX, 562).

<sup>429</sup> Washington’s *Writings* (ed. Ford, IV, 4).

<sup>430</sup> See note 462, following.

<sup>431</sup> *Writings*, II, 238. Since Hugh Blair’s *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* were published in Philadelphia in 1784 by Robert Aitken in the bookstore where Paine had worked, it seems reasonable to suppose that Paine had read them. (See C. R. Hildeburn, *A Century of Printing . . .*, Philadelphia, 1886, II, 426.) Paine cites with praise (*Writings*, I, 110) James Burgh’s *Political Disquisitions*, published in Philadelphia in 1775, in which (I, xiv) he argues for perspicuity and force in style.

<sup>432</sup> *Writings*, IV, 406. Referring to his papers in the *Providence Gazette* (January 18, 1783), Paine wrote, “I do not, neither shall I, rest the case upon elegance of language, or forcible expression. I mean to state it with all the plainness of conversation, and put the

In discussing a passage in *Common Sense* which had been willfully misinterpreted, Paine said it was "exceedingly plain, and expressed in such easy and familiar terms, that it scarcely admits of being made plainer."<sup>433</sup> He describes the *Rights of Man* as "a book calmly and rationally written, . . . in a fair, open, and manly manner."<sup>434</sup> He forbade himself "the use of equivocal expression or of mere ceremony."<sup>435</sup> "I bring reason to your ears, and in language as plain as A, B, C, hold up truth to your eyes."<sup>436</sup> In discussing the Deane affair he wrote, "As it is my design to make those who can scarcely read understand, I shall therefore avoid every literary ornament, and put it in language as plain as the alphabet."<sup>437</sup>

His second ideal was boldness. It is, he says, "curious to observe how soon this spell (of sentimental attachment to

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merits of it without a gloss." In "The Public Good" (*Writings*, II, 31) he said he aimed to have the reader find it "studiously plain, and, as far as I can judge, perfectly candid. What materials I could get at I have endeavored to place in a clear line, and deduce such arguments therefrom as the subject required."

<sup>433</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 145.

<sup>434</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 54-55.

<sup>435</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 115; see also I, 182, and I, 84.

<sup>436</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 178. In writing *Common Sense* it is probable that Paine was influenced by the literary taste of his patron and idol, Franklin, whom he intended to surprise with the pamphlet. Jefferson, a careful student of style, concluded that "No writer has exceeded Paine in ease and familiarity of style, in perspicuity of expression, happiness of elucidation, and in simple and unassuming language. In this he may be compared with Dr. Franklin; and indeed his *Common Sense* was, for awhile, believed to have been written by Dr. Franklin, and published under the borrowed name of Paine . . ." (Jefferson's *Writings*, Monticello edition, XV, 305). And he may have been influenced somewhat by Dr. Benjamin Rush, who suggested it and to whom Paine read it section by section. The literary theories of Dr. Rush are set forth in his *Essays, Literary, Moral, and Philosophical* (second ed., Philadelphia, 1806), pp. 27-42. Rush advocated simplicity and took Swift as his model. For Franklin's literary theories, see Mott and Jorgenson's *Franklin*, pp. xlvii-lvii.

<sup>437</sup> *Writings*, I, 409.

monarchy) can be dissolved. A single expression, boldly conceived and uttered, will sometimes put a whole company into their proper feelings: and whole nations are acted upon in the same manner."<sup>438</sup> In transferring this literary method, acquired in the rough and tumble of politics, to religion, Paine said he was pioneering in "a style of thinking and expression different to what had been customary in England."<sup>439</sup> "The hinting and intimating manner of writing that was formerly used on subjects of this kind, produced skepticism, but not conviction. It is necessary to be bold. Some people can be reasoned into sense, and others must be shocked into it. Say a bold thing that will stagger them, and they will begin to think."<sup>440</sup> The general spirit of Paine's approach is suggested in his conclusion, "I have now gone through the Bible, as a man would go through a wood with an axe on his shoulder and fell trees."<sup>441</sup>

Third, Paine was well aware of the controversial value of wit, properly controlled. "Wit," he said, "is naturally a volunteer, delights in action, and under proper discipline is capable of great execution. 'Tis a perfect master in the art of bush-fighting; and though it attacks with more subtilty than science, has often defeated a whole regiment of heavy artillery. . . . 'Tis a qualification which, like the passions, has a natural wildness, that requires governing. Left to itself, it soon overflows its banks, mixes with common filth, and brings disrepute on the fountain."<sup>442</sup> Contemporaries often compared Paine's wit to that of Voltaire. John Adams attributed the Federalists' defeat in part to a failure to guard themselves against "that scoffing, scorning wit, and that caustic malignity of soul, which appeared so remarkably in all the writings of Thomas Paine."<sup>443</sup>

<sup>438</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 481.

<sup>439</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 394.

<sup>440</sup> Quoted in Conway's *Life*, II, 298; see also *Writings*, III, 404.

<sup>441</sup> *Writings*, IV, 151.

<sup>442</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 16; see also IV, 342.

<sup>443</sup> John Adams, *Works*, IX, 278.

mical units, for the music of the spoken word.<sup>450</sup> Paine is often most attractive when he forgets his rationalistic philosophy and writes from the heart, allowing his style to vibrate with his deep sympathy for the sufferings of the poor and the unfortunate. "I speak an open and disinterested language," he said, "dictated by no passion but that of humanity . . . my country is the world, and my religion is to do good."<sup>451</sup>

Paine's fifth literary ideal involved the fruitful co-operation of the imagination and the judgment, *both* being regarded as essential to good writing. Like the neo-classicists,<sup>452</sup> he held that "the mainspring which puts all in motion corresponds to the imagination; the pendulum which corrects and regulates that motion, corresponds to the judgment. . . . If the judgment sleeps whilst the imagination keeps awake . . . the master of the school is gone out and the boys are in an uproar." His stress is upon a carefully adjusted balance and upon sternly purposeful control. He elaborates his ideal in censuring the style of the Abbé Raynal, parts of whose work he admired:

. . . How very few men there are in any country, who can at once, and without the aid of reflection and revisal, combine warm passions with a cool temper, and the full expansion of the imagination with the natural and necessary gravity of judgment, so as to be rightly balanced within themselves, and to make a reader feel, fancy, and understand justly at the same time. To call three powers of the mind into action at once, in a manner that neither shall interrupt, and that each shall aid and invigorate the other, is a talent very rarely possessed. It often happens that the weight of an argument is lost

<sup>450</sup>On Paine's "manner of composing" while walking, fashioning each sentence as a unit, see Hogg's *Life of Shelley* (ed. by Dowden), p. 517 ff.

<sup>451</sup>*Writings*, II, 472. See the moving passage (II, 493) which concludes his fourteen concrete suggestions for alleviating suffering.

<sup>452</sup>See F. B. Kaye, *Philological Quarterly*, VII, 178; and D. F. Bond, "Distrust of Imagination in English Neo-Classicism," *Philological Quarterly*, XIV, 54-69 (January, 1935).

by the wit of setting it off; or the judgment disordered by an intemperate irritation of the passions: yet a certain degree of animation must be felt by the writer, and raised in the reader, in order to interest the attention; and a sufficient scope given to the imagination, to enable it to create in the mind a sight of the persons, characters and circumstances, of the subject: for without these, the judgment will feel little or no excitement to office, and its determinations will be cold, sluggish, and imperfect. But if either or both of the two former are raised too high, or heated too much, the judgment will be jostled from its seat, and the whole matter, however important in itself, will diminish into a pantomime of the mind, in which we create images that promote no other purpose than amusement.<sup>453</sup>

This passage shows remarkable insight regarding the *modus operandi* of the writer of effective "applied" prose, especially when one considers that it was written in America in 1782, and it shows that Paine's power of winning assent through his writing was the result not of any hit-or-miss methods but of a carefully contemplated theory of literary art.

Having advocated this difficult balance and control of imagination and judgment necessary to the writer, Paine's sixth ideal involved the adjustment of language to thought with such exquisite precision as to create exactly the impression desired, and no other. The ex-soldier knew that ammunition is not more essential than accurate aiming. He sums the matter up as follows: "To fit the powers of thinking and the turn of language to the subject, so as to bring out a clear conclusion that shall hit the point in question and nothing else, is the true criterion in writing."<sup>454</sup> Conscious of his own earlier excesses in or-

<sup>453</sup> *Writings*, II, 69-70. Speaking of Deane's address, Paine stressed the need of a dignified style in public utterances. He said that "The spirit and language of it differ exceedingly from that cool penetrating judgment and refinement of manners of expression which fits, and is absolutely necessary, in the Plenipotentiary. His censures are coarse and vehement . . ." (*ibid.*, I, 397).

<sup>454</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 110.

nateness, he grew to understand that the means should always be subordinated to the end, the part to the whole, that writing may fail "through an excess of graces," if, as in Raynal's case, "the coloring is too high for the original," even though "the conception is lofty and the expression elegant."<sup>455</sup> As he boasted later, mindful, no doubt of his own struggles for literary self-control and artistic integrity, "To judge *rightly*, and to write *clearly*, and that upon all sorts of subjects, to be able to command thought and as it were to play with it at pleasure, and be always master of one's temper in writing, is the faculty of a serene mind and the attribute of a happy and philosophical temperament."<sup>456</sup> Just as Paine thought that the creation reveals the Creator, so a man's literary creation reveals his character. As we shall see shortly, Paine's stress on precision and the command of one's thoughts and words form part of his deistic creed involving obedience to the law and order which is nature.

Having satisfied himself as to the perfection of the units of his composition, striving, as we have seen, for candor, simplicity, and clarity, for boldness, for wit, for an appeal not only to reason but to feeling, for a balance between judgment and imagination, and for a purposeful and precise adjustment between language and ideas with reference to a definite audience, Paine strove, finally, to arrange his units, his carefully constructed sentences, in an architectonic pattern designed to give them their maximum effectiveness. He worshipped order in everything, but especially in literary composition. He especially censured Raynal,<sup>457</sup> William Smith,<sup>458</sup> and Burke for their disregard for order. In one of his happy phrases, he said that in trying to answer Burke's *Reflections* he had been obliged to tread "a pathless wilderness of rhapsodies."<sup>459</sup> "I love

<sup>455</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 110.

<sup>456</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 402.

<sup>457</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 110. See also (IV, 379) his criticism of Isaiah.

<sup>458</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 138.

<sup>459</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 302.

method," he said, "because I see and am convinced of its beauty and advantage. It is that which makes all business easy and understood, and without which everything becomes embarrassed and difficult." For "it is only by reducing complicated things to method and orderly connection that they can be understood with advantage, or pursued with success." Being usually obliged to write in haste in the face of emergencies, Paine seldom achieved perfect order in practice. Yet he is careful to light the way through his compositions by telling us what he is going to do, that he is doing it, and that he has done it. He makes liberal use of "signpost" sentences as well as "flash-backs" such as the "Recapitulation" at the end of Part One of *The Age of Reason*.<sup>460</sup> Such a method, in addition to the logical articulation of his ideas and their "damnable iteration," gave his writing such an orderly clearness that even the most unliterary readers could not miss his meaning.

Thus we have come full circle, Paine's last ideal of orderly method serving to make possible his first ideal of clear simplicity. Just as the first is grounded ultimately on his deistic faith that "man must go back to nature for information," since "perfection consists in simplicity," so his last ideal, that of order, is also grounded on his deistic faith. For the test of the revelation even of God himself is that "harmonious, magnificent order that reigns throughout the visible universe," an order which is "the standard to which everything must be brought that pretends to be the work or word of God."<sup>461</sup> Furthermore, the constant stress which Paine lays upon disciplined control, upon harmonizing a writer's powers by allegiance to a judgment which "corrects and regulates," "governing" wit, upon being able to "command thought and . . . play with it at pleasure" and to "hit the point in question and nothing else," is surely a reflection of current scientific deism

<sup>460</sup> For some examples see *Writings*, I, 290, 329; II, 83-84, 520; III, 331; IV, 62.

<sup>461</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 339-340.

of Paine's age, which involved a disciplined conformity to that law and order which we have seen this disciple of Newtonianism identifying with nature. Paine especially admired Bolingbroke and Pope as "Freethinkers" or deists, and it will be recalled that the latter, believing that "Order is Heav'n's first law," was the great exponent of disciplined precision and orderliness in literary composition. Paine's patron, Franklin, as we have seen, also exalted discipline and order in writing. Order was the passion of the age, not only in religion and politics and writing, but in art as well. Such were the literary theories<sup>462</sup> which guided him in his literary practice, which enabled him to command the attention of more than half a million readers, vigorously stirring them to accept the political, religious, economic, and social doctrines that helped to call into being the American Republic and the French Republic, as well as many humanitarian movements of later days. His style served as a trusty tool and was occasionally not without elements of beauty. As I have tried to indicate, however, one fundamental basis of his literary theories, as of his political, economic, social, and educational theories, is found in his own peculiar blending of science and deism.<sup>463</sup>

Paine's style was given superlative praise, as we have seen (note 436), by Jefferson, who thought that Paine was "the only other writer in America who can write better"<sup>464</sup> than he (Jefferson) could himself. Indeed, it was the Father of Democracy who admitted that he "professed the same principles"

<sup>462</sup> See *ibid.*, IV, 54, where he says "all the arts have originated" from the "knowledge of science" (Newtonianism) which leads to "the true theology." For a more detailed discussion, see H. H. Clark, "Thomas Paine's Theories of Rhetoric," *Transactions of the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters*, XXVIII, 307-339 (1933).

<sup>463</sup> Of course Paine must have been influenced by the literary discipline of neo-classicism, but it should be remembered that neo-classicism and deism reinforced each other. See A. O. Lovejoy, *op. cit.*

<sup>464</sup> Quoted in D. E. Wheeler's *Life . . . of Thomas Paine*, I, 327.

as those in *Rights of Man*. Those who have been accustomed to honor Jefferson but belittle Paine should remember this fact, and also Jefferson's high tribute in 1801 when Paine was bitterly attacked by his Calvinistic-Federalistic contemporaries: in advancing the original sentiments of democracy, he told Paine, "it will be your glory to have labored, and with as much effect as any man living."<sup>465</sup>

<sup>465</sup> Jefferson's *Writings*, Monticello Edition, VIII, 207; X, 224. If Jefferson was wiser than Paine in some ways, it is worth debating whether, in the light of history, Paine was not wiser in advocating (1) a coercive union as opposed to states' rights (which eventually encouraged secession and the Civil War); and (2) a league of nations and international co-operation, commercial and otherwise, as opposed to isolationism.

## CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

1737. Thomas Paine was born January 29, at Thetford in Norfolk, England, of a Quaker father and an Anglican mother. Educated Thetford Grammar School.
- 1750-54. Worked with his father, a staymaker, and served as a sailor.
- 1757c. In London, strongly influenced by lectures on Newtonian astronomy given by Benjamin Martin, James Ferguson, and Dr. Bevis.
- 1759-67. Lived in Sandwich, Dover, Margate, and Lincolnshire.
1759. First marriage. Worked as a staymaker.
1760. Wife dies.
- 1762-65. Exciseman at Grantham and Alford. Discharged for violation of trust.
1767. Employed by Mr. Gardiner in his school at Kensington.
- 1768-74. At Lewes, Sussex, as excise officer.
1771. Second marriage.
1772. Appointed by excisemen to address to Parliament in their behalf "The Case of the Officers of the Excise," requesting higher wages. Spent winter of 1772-1773 trying to influence members of Parliament. Made acquaintance of Oliver Goldsmith.
1774. Dismissed April 8 from the excise a second time. His shop sold April 14. Bankrupt.
- June 4th, Paine and his second wife separated, exact cause unknown.
- Attracted to Franklin in London, probably by his scientific and political reputation. (One of Paine's first papers in *Pennsylvania Magazine* was on a new electrical machine.) Major John Cartwright was publishing his ten letters later collected as *American Independence the Interest and Glory of Great Britain . . .* in Woodfall's

*Public Advertiser*, March 30, April 4, 18, 22, 25, May 2, 9, 16, 23, June 6, 1774. Because of John Wilkes' violent "North Briton" paper criticizing the King in 1763, he became the idol of the liberals as the champion of free speech and the rights of representation, being elected Lord Mayor of London in 1774. "Junius" (1767-1772) was asserting such liberal ideas as the subordination of the House to the people; his letters were collected by H. S. Woodfall in 1772. Paine left England in October and on November 30 landed in America with Franklin's letter of introduction (dated September 30) to his son-in-law, Richard Bache. Franklin recommends Paine as "an ingenious worthy young man," as "a clerk, or assistant tutor in a school, or assistant surveyor."

1775. March 4. Paine writes Franklin: "Your countenancing me has obtained for me many friends and much reputation . . . I have been applied to by several gentlemen to instruct their sons . . . and a printer and bookseller here, a man of reputation and property, Robert Aitken, . . . has applied to me for assistance. He had not above six hundred subscribers [to *The Pennsylvania Magazine*] when I first assisted him. We have now upwards of fifteen hundred, and daily increasing . . ."

March 8, Paine printed his antislavery essay, which won for him the friendship of Dr. Rush, who encouraged him to write *Common Sense*. Friendly with Rittenhouse, Clymer, etc.

- 1775-77. For eighteen months Paine served as editor of *The Pennsylvania Magazine*, the first number of which appeared at the end of January 1775, his connection beginning with the second number. Contributed also to the *Pennsylvania Journal*.

1776. January 10, published *Common Sense*, a powerful influence on the *Declaration of Independence*, July 4. The Forester Letters (reply to royalist Rev. William Smith), in *Pennsylvania Journal*, April 3, 10, 24, May 8. September 19, appointed aide-de-camp to General

Greene. Helped agitation which resulted in liberal constitution for Pennsylvania late in 1776.

December 19, the first number of *The Crisis* appeared, written to encourage the Revolutionary soldiers. (The sixteenth, and final number, was dated December 9, 1783.)

- 1777. April 17. Elected by Congress as Secretary of the Committee of Foreign Affairs.
- 1778-79. Controversy with Silas Deane (American Commissioner to France) in which Paine was obliged to resign his post as Secretary, January 8, 1779, because he has published information he had been officially trusted to keep secret. His motive: to save Congress money falsely claimed by Deane.
- 1780. Received degree of Master of Arts from University of Pennsylvania. With Robert Morris, he helped start a bank, which became the Bank of North America, to support Army. December 30, *Public Good*, a pamphlet urging that western lands claimed by Virginia should become the property not of one colony but of the nation. Clerk of Pennsylvania Assembly for about a year from November 2, 1779.
- 1781. February, sailed from Boston with Col. John Laurens to seek French aid for America. Arrived at L'Orient, France, in March. Returned August 25, having sailed from Brest, June 1, after only a few weeks in France.
- 1782-83. Published "Letter to Abbé Raynal," defending America against Raynal's erroneous impressions. February 10, 1782, R. Morris, Livingston, and Washington arranged to have Paine paid \$800.00 a year for secret services as a writer in the cause of liberty. In *Providence Gazette* (December 21 and 28, 1782, January 4, 11, and 18, February 1, 1783) published six important letters defending right of Federal government to tax Rhode Island.
- 1785. Devoted himself to inventions such as an iron bridge without piers, and a smokeless candle.

1786. *Dissertations on Government, the Bank, and Paper Money*, defending the bank he had helped to found and attacking paper money as unjust balm for debtors.
1787. April, sailed to France, partly to promote his iron bridge. *Prospects on the Rubicon* published in England to discourage war with France. Friendly with Burke and Fox. Visited his aged mother at Thetford. Wrote several letters from England to Jefferson and to William Short in Paris, informing them of English opinion of French situation. Saw much of Jefferson.
1789. September to March, resident in France, a witness of early events of the French Revolution. Received English patent for bridge, erected in June, 1790. Honored by Lafayette with key to Bastille to be sent to Washington.
1791. In France wrote "A Republican Manifesto" calling for abolition of monarchy which was nailed to the door of the Assembly in July. Helped Condorcet, Bonneville, Duchâtelet, (and Brissot?) found "Société Républicaine." Helped found a journal *Le Républicain* of which four issues appeared. February, published, through Godwin and Holcroft, *The Rights of Man*, Part I, with dedicatory epistle to Washington (a reply to Burke's *Reflections*, which appeared Nov. 1, 1790). Associated with republicans in Paris. *Rights of Man* translated into French by Lanthénas and published in May. Published in *Moniteur*, July 8, his letter to Sieyès, who had criticized republicans. In London, after July, associated with reformer-friends such as Horne Tooke, Rickman, Priestley, Blake, Mary Wollstonecraft. August, wrote "Address and Declaration of the Friends of Universal Peace and Liberty," a manifesto showing revolutionary sentiment had crossed channel. November, one of the leaders of "Revolutionary Society" in London.
1792. February 17, *The Rights of Man*, Part II, written mostly at Rickman's house in London. May, Paine's publisher, Jordan, indicted. June 8, Paine charged with sedition;

appeared before Court of King's Bench; his trial appointed for Dec. 18. September 12, made very revolutionary speech to the society of the "Friends of Liberty." Next day he decided to escape to France, where he had been elected September 6 to represent Calais in Convention. During the same week he had been elected to represent Oise, Somme, and Puy de Dôme. Arrived in Paris September 19, just escaping the September massacres. Wrote "Address to the Addressers," really Part III of *Rights of Man*, the spiciest of his writings, demanding that the British people call a national assembly to consider establishing a republic. Paine's effigy burned throughout England in November and December. Outlawed, December.

- 1793. Paine was one of the nine members of the committee for making a Constitution for France. (It was not adopted.) France declared war on England, February 1. January 15, when Convention voted execution of Louis XVI, Paine invited unpopularity by his opposition. Ceased attending meetings of Convention after June 2. December 28, carried to Luxembourg Prison, after leaving manuscript of *Age of Reason*, Part I, with his friend Joel Barlow. In prison ten months.
- 1793. *Le siècle de la raison*. (Soon suppressed by translator.)
- 1794. November 4, released through James Monroe, American Ambassador to France, in whose house he lived for 18 months.
- 1794. *The Age of Reason*, Part I, published in Paris, New York, and London. Written in a house at 63, Rue Faubourg St. Denis, where he was visited by such radicals as the Christies, the Condorcets, Mary Wollstonecraft, Capt. Imlay, the Brissots, and Madame Roland.
- 1795. Readmitted to Convention. *Dissertation on the First Principles of Government* (Paris).
- 1796. *The Age of Reason*, Part II (preface dated October, 1795). Written while Paine lived at Monroe's house, 101 Rue de Richelieu. *Decline and Fall of the English*

*System of Finance. Letter to Washington*, which brought upon Paine the hatred of Washington's great host of friends.

1797. *Agrarian Justice*, written during the winter of 1795-96 at Monroe's house. Following this period Paine lived with Nicolas de Bonneville and his wife.

*Discourse to the Theophilanthropists.*

1802. September 1, sailed from France, arriving in Baltimore October 30. Orthodox reaction in America made Paine unpopular as a reviler of Christianity. Lived at his farm in Bordentown, and later in New York City. Eight *Letters to the Citizens of the United States*, attacking the Federalists.

1809. June 8, died. Buried in New Rochelle, New York.

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Conway, Moncure D. *The Life of Thomas Paine*. New York: 1892. 2 vols. (Although eloquently partisan and over-stressing Quakerism to the neglect of other factors, this is the best life now available, and contains most of the materials. For some contemporary reviews, see *Academy*, XLII, 559 f.; *Dial*, XIII, 132 ff.; *Nation*, LV, 51 ff.; *Saturday Review*, LXXIV, 511; *Spectator*, LXV, 529; *Westminster Review*, CXXXVIII, 469. Frank Smith [*American Literature*, IX, 259] finds Conway "perhaps exhausting but certainly not exhaustive on many phases of his subject—for instance, Paine's connection with the Pennsylvania class war in 1779 [see, in present Bibliography, Brunhouse], with incipient Federalism after the American Revolution [see Dorfman, and Clark's introduction to *New Letters*], with the reform movement in England [see W. T. Hall, Laprade, P. A. Brown, and Birley], with the Jacobin-Girondin conflict and the Directory in France [see C. Brinton, *A Decade of Revolutions*, 1934, full bibliography, pp. 293-322], with international clericalism [see F. A. Aulard, *Christianity and the French Revolution*, London, 1927, and works there cited by P. de la Gorce, L. Sciout, and Mathiez], and with Jeffersonian Democracy [see Link and his bibliography]. There is plenty of original investigating to be done in the relations of Tom Paine to his age.")

Conway, Moncure D. *Thomas Paine (1737-1809) et la Révolution dans les deux mondes*. Traduit de l'anglais par Félix Rabbe. Paris: 1900. (In his *Autobiography* [Boston, 1904], II, 440, Conway characteristically says of the translation: "It contains much not in my English work, and is the only book in which the relations between France and America throughout the revolution and in both countries are given with detail and authentication.")

Creel, George. *Tom Paine, Liberty Bell*. New York: 1932. (Colorful journalistic adulation.)

Eckler, Peter. *Life of Thomas Paine*. New York: 1912.

- Gould, F. J. *Thomas Paine (1737-1809)*. London and Boston: 1925. (A brief popular life, reasonably well-balanced, in "The Roadmaker Series.")
- Jackson, J. Katherine. *Outlines of the Literary History of Colonial Pennsylvania*. Lancaster: 1906. (Pp. 114-119 are devoted to Paine.)
- Linton, William J. *The Life of Thomas Paine*. London: 1840. (By an agitator. Reprinted in New York in 1892 by Peter Eckler.)
- Pearson, Hesketh. *Tom Paine, Friend of Mankind*. New York: 1936.
- Rickman, Thomas Clio. *The Life of Thomas Paine*. London: 1814. (The most valuable of the early lives, by a friend at whose house Paine wrote the Second Part of *Rights of Man*. See also Wheeler, above.)
- Sedgwick, Ellery. *Thomas Paine*. Boston: 1899.
- Sheldon, Frederick. "Tom Paine's First Appearance in America," *Atlantic Monthly*, IV, 565-575 (Nov., 1859). (A valuable and dispassionate account of Paine's life from 1774 to 1787. Gives some details not found in other biographies. Chiefly valuable for its picture of the contemporary historical scenes which gave rise to Paine's revolutionary pamphlets.)
- Sheldon, Frederick. "Thomas Paine in England and in France," *Atlantic Monthly*, IV, 690-709 (Dec., 1859). (An indispensable account of Paine's troubled fifteen years abroad, 1787-1802. Relies on sources "scattered about in newspapers and pamphlets"; hence much fresh material. Especially good on the contemporary occasion for Paine's various pamphlets. Well-balanced.)
- Sheldon, Frederick. "Thomas Paine's Second Appearance in the United States," *Atlantic Monthly*, IV, 1-17 (July, 1859). (A well-written essay, mostly devoted to the backgrounds of Anti-Federalist and Federalist strife in the seventeen-nineties. Urges that we "try to forget the carbuncled nose, the snuffy

waistcoat, the unorthodox sneer," and that we "cut his life short at 1796, and revere the author of *Common Sense* and the *Rights of Man*" [pp. 16-17]. Well documented, although without page references. Cites many contemporary newspapers. Sympathetic towards Paine's party. Claims [p. 11] that "The leaders during the Reign of Terror in France and during the late despotism in America [John Adams] were the same men in character.")

Sherwin, W. *Memoirs of the Life of Thomas Paine* . . . London: 1819. (Mainly a compilation. Sympathetic.)

Smith, Frank. "New Light on Thomas Paine's First Year in America, 1775," *American Literature*, I, 347-371 (Jan. 1930). (Follows Albert Matthews in claiming that Paine landed "no earlier than December 7 and no later than December 12, 1774" in opposition to the date set by Conway, Nov. 30, 1774. See above. Attempts to identify some early writings as by Paine, although he admits his "method is vague and inconclusive.")

Smith, Frank. *Thomas Paine, Liberator*. New York: 1938. (Narrative biography painted with a very wide brush; without footnotes or bibliography. Robert Spiller [*American Literature*, XI, 104] concludes that "One-sided condemnation of his [Paine's] antagonists is its weakness"; and Crane Brinton [*Saturday Review*, Oct. 8, 1938] calls it "violent partisan writing." Herschell Brickell [*N.Y. Times Book Review*, Oct. 2, 1938] concludes that Mr. Smith gives no explanation "that is at all adequate" to account for Paine's development from a nobody to a power. J. Dorfman [*American Historical Review*, LIV, 857-859] concludes that "this is by no means . . . a definitive study of Paine. It is especially deficient in adequate analysis of his underlying economics . . . Paine based his politics on a clear-cut set of economic arguments." And Paine's literary theories in relation to his practice, as well as detailed evidence of his vogue as seen in contemporary newspapers, magazines, and pamphlets are practically ignored. Interesting in its enthusiasm, but Conway and Miss Best had already provided that.)

- Smith, Frank. "The Date of Thomas Paine's First Arrival in America," *American Literature*, III, 317-318 (Nov. 1931). ("Nullifies" assertion regarding date given in Smith's first article, and finds Conway's original date was correct.)
- "Tom Paine: His Life, Habits, and Death." *New York Observer*. Extra. April 15, 1886.
- Stephen, Leslie. "Thomas Paine," in *Dictionary of National Biography*, XLIII, 69-79. (Excellent.)
- Vale, Gilbert. *Life of Thomas Paine*. New York: 1841. (Sympathetic. Based in part on Sherwin, with some new material on Paine's last years in New York.)
- Van de Weyde, William. *The Life of Thomas Paine* (the first volume of *The Life and Works of Thomas Paine*). New York: 1925. (Extreme adulation.)
- Wheeler, Daniel Edwin. See Vol. I of his edition of Paine's *Writings*, above.

### III. INTERPRETATION AND CRITICISM

- Adams, John Quincy. "Letters of Publicola," in *Writings*, ed. W. C. Ford, I, 65-110. New York: 1913. (Eleven letters, published in the *Columbian Centinel*, from June 8 to July 27, 1791. They constitute the shrewdest contemporary American rebuttal of the *Rights of Man*.)
- Adler, Felix. "Thomas Paine," *The Standard*, XXII, 123-128 (Feb., 1936). (An address, delivered in 1880, combining appreciation of Paine as a liberal of his age and wise criticism of his "harsh invective" and dogmatic reliance on nature as the basis of religion. Shows how the faith in the benevolence of nature for which Paine stood has been invalidated by the arguments of J. S. Mill. One of the best of the brief undocumented critiques.)
- [Anonymous.] "The English Voltaire. Tom Paine: Citizen of the World," *Times Literary Supplement* (London), Jan. 30, 1937, pp. 65-66. (Claims Paine did not realize the distinc-

- tions between the American and the French revolutions, and that he was out of the currents of things in France, while his escape from the guillotine was mainly due to "the indifference of those in authority." His Biblical criticism is today "negligible," although the *Age of Reason* was "admirably designed for classes which were most wed to Biblical literalism."
- Bennett, DeRobigne M. *Address on Thomas Paine's 139th Birthday*, by D. M. Bennett, and other short speeches. New York: 1876. (Includes addresses by Stephen P. Andrews, Hugh B. Brown, G. L. Henderson, poems by W. W. Carter, L. Masquerier, E. M. M.)
- Böhringer, Rudolf. *Die Propaganda Thomas Paines während des Amerikanischen Unabhängigkeits-Kampfes*. Berlin: 1938. (A 105-page study of *Common Sense* and the *Crisis* under four main heads—Propaganda against England; Propaganda for the "New" America; Propaganda Method; Language and Style. Frank Smith finds it a "superficial, . . . tedious, distorted, and barren performance" in his review in *American Literature*, X, 504-505, Jan., 1939.)
- Blunck, R. *Thomas Paine, Ein Leben für Amerika*. Berlin: 1936.
- Boynton, G. M. "Thomas Paine," *Americana*, X, 881-893 (Oct., 1915).
- Bradford, Gamaliel. "Damaged Souls," *Harper's Magazine*, CXLVI, 369-378 (Feb. 1923). Also in Bradford's book, *Damaged Souls*, Boston: 1923. (A well-written attempt to present Paine as a radical. Neglects his many conservative elements prior to the French Revolution. In the *Letters of Gamaliel Bradford*, edited by V. W. Brooks [Boston, 1934, pp. 261-262], Bradford states the thesis behind his essay. Paine had "a screw loose": the "predominating element of moral or mental damage" was his "mere instinct or pleasure of destruction." "It seemed to me that I felt everywhere in him, perhaps mistakenly, that spirit which not only makes revolutions, but thoroughly enjoys them, that unconquerable

instinct of revolt against the established order of things, whatever it may be, which would move restlessly from one turmoil to another, and would never be contented or at rest in settled peace. . . . In Paine the instinct also seemed to me to be tinged and discolored with a certain element of vulgarity, from which the Miltonic type is magnificently free.")

Brailford, H. N. *Shelley, Godwin, and Their Circle*. New York: 1913. (Contains a brief but well-considered exposition of Paine's place in the history of radical and romantic thought.)

Brown, P. A. *The French Revolution in England*. London: 1918. (Also R. Birley, *English Jacobins*, Oxford, 1924.)

Brunhouse, R. L. *The Counter-Revolution in Pennsylvania, 1776-1790*. Philadelphia: 1942. (Continues J. P. Selsam's *The Pennsylvania Constitution of 1776. A Study in Revolutionary Democracy* [1936]. Brunhouse's work is impressively documented and provides a useful guide, with full orientation, to Paine's newspaper controversies of this neglected period of his life.)

Burke, Edmund. *Reflections on the French Revolution*, edited by W. Alison Phillips and C. B. Phillips. Cambridge, England: 1912; revised 1929. (This work by Burke in 1790, which Paine wrote the *Rights of Man* to answer, is very ably edited with a forty-page introduction and fifty pages of detailed notes. These are of much use in helping us understand Paine's position in relation to that of his main opponent and to contemporary issues.)

Cairns, W. B. *British Criticisms of American Writings, 1783-1815* (*University of Wisconsin Studies in Language and Literature*, No. I, 1918), pp. 56-60. (Valuable in assembling a considerable number of references to English comment on Paine.)

Calverton, V. F. "Thomas Paine; God-Intoxicated Revolutionary," *Scribner's*, XCV, 15-22 (Jan., 1934).

Clark, Harry H. "Thomas Paine's Relation to Voltaire and Rousseau," *Revue Anglo-Américaine*, IX, 305-318; 393-405

(Avril et Juin, 1932). (Presents evidence relating to Paine's interest in France and parallels between his thought and that of the thinkers indicated.)

Clark, Harry H. "An Historical Interpretation of Thomas Paine's Religion," *University of California Chronicle*, XXXV, 56-87 (Jan., 1933). (An attempt to show that scientific deism is much more important than Quakerism as the basis of Paine's doctrines. Presents parallels between Paine and popularizers of Newtonianism, Benjamin Martin and James Ferguson, to whose lectures Paine listened at the age of twenty. Shows that in urging a return to nature Paine meant a return to a harmonious law and order comparable to that of the Newtonian system.)

Clark, Harry H. "Thomas Paine's Theories of Rhetoric," *Transactions of the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters*, XXVIII, 307-339 (1933). (Assembles, and interprets with reference to contemporary views, Paine's utterances relating to writing, showing that his success as a pamphleteer was due in part to definite theories of literary art.)

Clark, Harry H. "Toward a Reinterpretation of Thomas Paine," *American Literature*, V, 133-145 (May, 1933). (A tentative abstract of a unified and comprehensive interpretation of Paine's thought, religious, political, economic, humanitarian, educational, and literary, considering scientific deism as its core.)

Connell, J. M. "Thomas Paine—The Man as He Was. A Bicentenary Notice," *The Hibbert Journal*, XXXV, 213-226 (1937). (Presents some new biographical details, of very minor significance, regarding Paine's early life at Lewes. His second wife's father was not a Quaker but a Calvinist. Claims that [p. 219] Fox's "inner light" can be found in *Common Sense*, and that [p. 223] Burns "shared Paine's revolutionary opinions." Appreciative.)

Corey, W. A. *Common Sense, a Reading of Thomas Paine's Revolutionary Pamphlet, "Common Sense" in the Light of the*

*Socialist Revolution*. Los Angeles: 1906. (A 36-page pamphlet which merely uses the sequence of topics in *Common Sense* as springboards for attacking what is regarded as the parallel tyranny of capitalism. Clever and direct, but shows no realization of the fact that Paine himself in his later work, such as *Agrarian Justice*, approached the socialistic position. Says the arguments in *Common Sense* against tyranny are "as useful today as when first penned.")

Davidson, John Morrison. *Concerning Four Precursors of Henry George and the Single Tax*. . . . London and Glasgow: 1902. (Unscholarly, but suggestive. "It is noteworthy that in theory Paine was almost, if not altogether, at one with his contemporaries, Spence and Ogilvie, on the land question" [p. 53].)

Davidson, Philip. *Propaganda and the American Revolution, 1763-1783*. Chapel Hill, N.C.: 1941. (An excellent scholarly work useful in helping us to see Paine in relation to other propagandists of the Revolution such as Samuel Adams.)

Desjardins, Paul. "Thomas Paine, Republican," *Revue Bleue*, Fourth Series, XVI.

Dodd, W. E. "Tom Paine," *American Mercury*, XXI, 477-483 (Dec., 1930). (Mainly biographical; thinks Paine was great but unappreciated. Stresses his services to America.)

Dorfman, J. "The Economic Philosophy of Thomas Paine," *Political Science Quarterly*, LIII, 372-386 (Sept. 1938). (Documented scholarly exposition, emphasizing the fact that, contrary to general views, Paine's economic objectives were much the same as Hamilton's. See Penniman, who argues that Dorfman does not give sufficient weight to the fact that Paine subordinates economic to humanitarian considerations.)

Dos Passos, John. *Living Thoughts of Thomas Paine*. New York: 1940. (The fifty-two page introduction, mainly biographical, is very sympathetic. By an influential liberal novelist.)

- Dunning, W. A. *A History of Political Theories from Rousseau to Spencer*. New York: 1933. (Pp. 110-116 deal with Paine. The book is useful for historical orientation.)
- Edmunds, A. *Thomas Paine*. 1876. (A review of a lecture delivered by the Rev. A. L. Lindsley, D.D., in Portland, Ore.)
- Elliott, James B. *Rededication of the Paine Monument and Assignment of Its Custody to the City of New Rochelle*. Philadelphia, 1909. (A record of the exercises and speeches delivered at the monument, compiled by James B. Elliott, secretary of the Paine Memorial Association.)
- Ensor, R. C. K. "Tom Paine's Bicentenary," *Spectator* (London), CLVIII, 163-164 (Jan. 29, 1937). (Interesting as a reflection of present opinion. Concludes that Paine's religious ideas are "far removed from the educated thought of the world today," and that "his capacity for indiscretions was too great" to enable him to be usefully employed in administrative political positions. While he occasionally showed foresight and insight, he was not original, and his "merely intellectual quality was shallow," characterized by looseness and naïveté.)
- Falk, R. B. "Thomas Paine: Deist or Quaker?" *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, LXII, 52-63 (Jan. 1938). (An important scholarly study, which, among other things, refutes Conway's views by showing that the Quaker Elias Hicks violently attacked Paine instead of following him.)
- Fox, W. J. "Burke and Paine," *Lectures to the Working Classes*. London: 1845.
- Garrison, F. W. "Paine and the Physiocrats," *Freeman*, VIII, 205-206 (Nov. 7, 1923). (A brief and inconclusive attempt to show that Paine's economic views were in harmony with those of the French revolutionary economists.)
- Gillis, James M. "Tom Paine," *Catholic World*, CXXI, 48-58 (April, 1925). (The third of a series of lectures on "Champions of Unbelief." Cogent criticism from the Catholic

angle. Censures Paine for cocksureness, violent intolerance, and unfairness in representing his opponents' views. Says he honors priests too much in claiming they invented revealed Christianity for "selling pardons," etc., that it is an instinctive answer to an inward hunger which is merely nourished by priests. Points out Paine's inconsistency in stressing the integrity of mankind while arguing that for nineteen centuries mankind has been gulled into accepting a false and hypocritical religion. Shows some of his misconceptions of the Bible. Concludes that Paine's rejection of any religious union if applied to politics would result in anarchy. America has been wise in accepting Paine's ideas of political union and rejecting his religious anarchy. Stimulating.)

Hall, W. P. *British Radicalism, 1791-97*. New York: 1912. (One of the most intensive studies of its subject, valuable in balancing the interpretation of Laprade, who criticized Hall for presenting radicalism as arising too suddenly and for thinking that a considerable party of reformers sought "armed insurrection" [*American Historical Review*, XX, 881].)

Hansen, A. O. *Liberalism and American Education in the Eighteenth Century*. New York: 1926. (Pp. 22-29 contain a well-documented exposition of Paine's early political views as representative of the "principles of the American Revolution." Although Paine's own educational theories are ignored, the book is valuable in presenting those of his contemporaries, thus providing necessary orientation for this phase of Paine's thought. Emphasis is placed on the central importance of faith in the idea of progress.)

Hearnshaw, F. J. C., ed. *Social and Political Ideas of the Revolutionary Era*. London: 1931. (The essay on Paine, by Rev. Norman Sykes, pp. 100-140, dispassionate and acute, is probably the best brief treatment available.)

Holyoake, G. J., ed. *The Rights of Man*. New York: 1915. Everyman Edition. (The eight-page introduction is mainly biographical but is very sympathetic, presenting

Paine as "the poor man's friend," and "a truer Englishman than Cobbett." "History holds not many names of such integrity.")

Hooker, Edward N. "Wordsworth's Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff," *Studies in Philology*, XXVIII, 522-531 (July, 1931). (A plausible attempt to show by parallel passages that Wordsworth may have been indebted to Paine's *Rights of Man* for some of his early radical ideas. [C. W. Roberts, "The Influence of Godwin on Wordsworth's Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff," *Studies in Philology*, XXIX, 588-606 (Oct. 1932), admits "there may have been some Paine influence" but emphasizes Godwin.] On backgrounds, see also J. R. MacGillivray, *Wordsworth and His Revolutionary Friends*, an admirable doctoral dissertation outlined in *Harvard University Summaries of Theses*, 1930, pp. 203-205.)

Horton, W. M. *Theism and the Scientific Spirit*. New York: 1933. (Chap. II.)

Hubbard, Elbert. *Thomas Paine*. East Aurora, New York: 1914.

Ingersoll, Robert G. "Thomas Paine," *North American Review*, CLV, 181-195 (August, 1892); also in Ingersoll's *Works* (New York: 1900-1902), pp. 319-339.

Ingersoll, Robert G. "Thomas Paine," in *The Gods, and other Lectures*. Peoria: 1874. (See McClure below.)

Ingersoll, Robert G. "A Vindication of Thomas Paine," *Works*, V, 445-524. New York: 1900-1902.

Jourdain, M. "Tom Paine," *Open Court*, XXXV, 577-583 (Oct. 1921). (Praises Paine's humanitarian schemes, and shows [p. 578] that Priestley was his precursor in urging old age and sickness pensions.)

Koch, G. A. *Republican Religion*. New York: 1933. (Readable survey, concentrating on the chief deists beginning with Ethan Allen and Elihu Palmer. Valuable bibliography, pp. 299-328. See also Morais, below.)

Laprade, W. T. *England and the French Revolution*. Baltimore: 1909. (Minimizes Paine, but valuable for orientation.)

Laski, Harold. "A Valiant Pamphleteer: The Thomas Paine Bicentenary," *Manchester Guardian Weekly*, Feb. 5, 1937, p. 116. (The liberal Mr. Laski claims that time has enlarged Paine's stature, and that with the exception of Marx he appears to be "the most influential pamphleteer of all time," and that *Agrarian Justice* anticipated "most of the beneficent social reforms accomplished in the last thirty years." *Rights of Man* made "the inner meaning of the French Revolution clear to the British working men," while "no other book [than the *Age of Reason*] has done so much to liberate the working classes of Anglo-Saxon countries from the trammels of an ugly superstition.")

Leftman, Henry. "The Real Thomas Paine, Patriot and Publicist, a Philosopher Misunderstood," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History*, XLVI, 81-99 (1922). (An ardent defense, undocumented. Claims all Paine's work was inspired by intense human sympathy and that in religion he didn't pass beyond some modern ecclesiastics.)

LeGallienne, Richard. "Thomas Paine in Paris," *Légion d'Honneur*, VI, 5-14 (July, 1935). (Brief eulogistic survey. "Surrounded by histrionic madmen, he was always cool-headed and businesslike, always the practical man, keeping firm hold of the original inspiring ideas of the Revolution, and aloof from the excesses of those who distorted them by their blood-thirsty fanaticism." "Washington's achievements are no greater" than those of Paine.)

Link, E. P. *Democratic-Republican Societies, 1790-1800*. New York: 1942. (A valuable Columbia dissertation, fully documented, with bibliography, showing how some forty American political societies took the doctrines of Paine as their "lodestar" in serving as influential "schools of political knowledge." Very useful in supplementing Conway and Brunhouse in helping us to understand the history of the

ideas for which Paine stood in relation to incipient Federalism after the Revolution.)

Lippard, George. *Thomas Paine, Author Soldier of the American Revolution*. Philadelphia: 1852.

McClure, James B., ed. *Mistakes of Ingersoll on Thomas Paine*. Chicago: 1880. (As shown by E. P. Goodwin, W. M. Blackburn, D.D., Bishop Fallows, Rev. Simeon Gilbert, Père Hyacinthe, Prof. Wilcox, Rev. James MacLaughlin, W. F. Hatfield, D.D., and others. Interesting as showing Paine's power of stirring violent debate nearly a century after the controversy over deism.)

McGovern, John. "Ben Franklin and Tom Paine," *National Magazine*, XXIII, 426-430.

Martin, Kingsley. "Thomas Paine." Tract No. 217, Fabian Society. (A well-considered and compressed analysis by a master of eighteenth-century thought, especially interesting in showing the extent to which modern socialists accept Paine's doctrines. "J. S. Mill had learned to agree with Paine that the achievement of liberty depends upon a just regulation by the state of private property" [p. 20]. Contrast with Dorfman, above.)

Matthews, Albert. "Thomas Paine and the Declaration of Independence," *Massachusetts Historical Society*, XLIII, 241-253 (1910). (A scholarly and conclusive refutation of the view, often expressed, that Paine had an important part in formulating the Declaration of Independence. An expansion of Matthews' paper in *Notes and Queries*, 10th Series, XII, Dec. 4, 1909, pp. 441-443. For further refutation of this unfounded view, especially advanced by Sedgwick and Conway, see John H. Hazelton, *The Declaration of Independence*. New York: 1906, pp. 450-451.)

Merriam, C. E., Jr. "The Political Theories of Thomas Paine," *Political Science Quarterly*, XIV, 389-404. (An able exposition by an authority on American political thought. See also his volume, *A History of American Political Theories* [New

York: 1903]. Finds Paine's doctrines old, but finds him the most influential exponent of representative republican government in his era, chiefly because of his literary skill. See also Persinger, below.)

Morais, H. M. *Deism in Eighteenth-Century America*. New York: 1934. (Useful and well-documented as far as it goes. Perry Miller says Morais makes "very little effort to go below the surface to correlate closely the intellectual manifestations with the social background. Neither does he attempt to analyze the inner logic of ideas, the evolution of the deistic philosophy as such. His treatment is external . . ." [*International Journal of Ethics*, XLV, 363-365, April, 1935].)

Moreau, Joseph N., compiler. *Testimonials to the Merits of Thomas Paine*. Boston: 1874.

Moses, Ernest C. "Was Thomas Paine an Infidel at Heart?" *Americana*, VII, 641-650 (July, 1912).

Mott, F. L., and Jorgenson, C. F. *Benjamin Franklin*. New York: 1936. (The closely documented, valuable introduction interprets Paine's idol with emphasis on science and deism. Since the annotated bibliography [pp. clxxiv ff.] includes books on the age as a whole, they are not included here.)

Moulton, C. W., ed. *Library of Literary Criticism of English and American Authors*. Buffalo, New York: 1901-05. IV, 529-541. (Contains a list of Paine's works and a useful assembly of comments on Paine from 1776 to 1897.)

Muzzey, David. "Thomas Paine and American Independence," *American Review* [Bloomington, Ill.] IV, 278-288 (May-June, 1926). (Appreciative survey. Claims that the Monroe Doctrine may be traced back to *Common Sense*, which is partly echoed in the Federal Constitution. *Rights of Man* became an "accepted exposition of Republican doctrines of Jefferson, Madison, and Gallatin," and Paine is said to have "contributed signally to that triumph of democracy in the

election of Jefferson." Claims that Paine's religion "was much like that of a liberal Unitarian of today.")

Nicolson, Marjorie. "Thomas Paine, Edward Nares, and Mrs. Piozzi's Marginalia," in *Huntington Library Bulletin*, No. 10, pp. 103-133 (Oct., 1936). (Important recognition, by a distinguished historian of ideas, of the fact that the scientific doctrine of "the plurality of worlds" is "the central doctrine upon which the *Age of Reason* is founded" [p. 111]. Compare Conway's emphasis on Quakerism. Professor Nicolson explains the "shock" resulting from Paine's book by the fact that, "though the realization of it is in no way original with him, it was he who made his period aware of the ultimate effect of belief in a plurality of worlds, with its vast conception of cosmic universes, upon orthodox theology" [p. 112].)

Parrington, Vernon L. *The Colonial Mind, 1620-1800*. New York: 1927. (Pp. 327-341. Stimulating analysis and appreciation, but tends to lay undue stress on the dubious idea that Paine "was Gallic in his psychology of human nature and his passionate humanitarianism," that "he drew largely from French thought" [p. 341], and that he was "essentially a Physiocratic agrarian" [p. 337].)

Penniman, Howard. "Thomas Paine—Democrat," *American Political Science Review*, XXXVII, 244-262 (April, 1943). (One of the most recent and best documented brief expositions of Paine's political ideas *after* 1791 as satisfying "all the requirements of the majority-rule democrat" [p. 260]. Well-organized, with sections on Popular Sovereignty, Majority Rule, Equality, Popular Consultation, and Democracy and Deism. Attacks [pp. 249, 251-252, 257] Dorfman's interpretation of Paine on property, and holds that Paine subordinated it to humanitarian concern for the good of all men. The final section, holding that Paine's democracy found its ultimate sanction in deism [in "immutable principles and absolute moral laws" based on nature interpreted by science] follows "the excellent article by H. H. Clark" [p. 260].)

Persinger, C. E. "The Political Philosophy of Thomas Paine," in The University of Nebraska's *Graduate Bulletin*, C, Series VI, No. 3, July 1901, pp. 54-74. (A fully documented study showing that Paine shared with his contemporaries in accepting what are regarded as the five basic principles of the Revolutionary Period. These are stated as follows: "(1) Rights are inherent in man, divinely and inalienably bestowed upon him by the Creator; (2) The origin of the State is in a compact, actual or implied; (3) The purpose or object of the State is two-fold: First, the preservation of unsundered natural rights; second, the general welfare of society, or 'the public good'; (4) Sovereignty is divisible, the individual surrendering a portion to the State in order that he may be made more secure in the enjoyment of that retained; (5) Any encroachment upon the unsundered portion of the individual's natural rights vitiates the social compact and gives rise to the individual right of revolution" [pp. 54-55]. A valuable assembly of Paine's political ideas, topically arranged, without much comment or criticism.)

Powell, E. P. "A Study of Thomas Paine," *Arena*, VIII, 717-732 (Nov. 1893). (Brief biography and eulogy, with scant documentation. Paine is regarded [p. 722] as "one of the greatest men of our Revolutionary era." Emphasis is on his political rather than his religious ideas, but it is said [p. 731] that "The *Age of Reason* grows mild and mellow in the light of controversies which now agitate theology. The higher criticism of professors in theological seminaries and leading preachers in all sects, is an arrow's flight ahead of Thomas Paine in its far-reaching consequences, and not inferior in its manly adhesion to truth." The *Arena* magazine, edited by B. O. Flower, did much to further the general ideas for which Paine stood.)

Preston, S. "Tribute to Thomas Paine," *Truth Seeker Tracts*, No. 34, New York: 1876.

Rabbe, Félix. "Thomas Paine, d'après les travaux récents de M. Conway," *La Révolution Française*, XXXV, 46-62; 449-

- 464; XXXVI, 70-89 (1898-1899). (By an ex-priest, a translator of Conway's biography of Paine, this article is probably the best account of Paine's activity in France yet available, although it is frankly partisan. See also Washburne.)
- Ramsdell, Sarah A. *Paine's Age of Thought*. San Francisco: 1872.
- Reed, William B. "Life and Character of Thomas Paine," *North American Review*, LVII, 1-58 (July, 1843).
- Rensburg, John E. *The Fathers of Our Republic: Paine, Jefferson, Washington, Franklin*. Boston, 1887.
- Rensburg, John E. *Paine and Wesley*. New York: 1912.
- Rensburg, John E. *Six Historic Americans; Paine, Jefferson, Washington, Franklin, Lincoln, Grant, the Fathers and Saviors of our Republic, Freethinkers*. New York: 1906.
- Rensburg, John E. *Thomas Paine, the Apostle of Religious and Political Liberty*. Boston: 1881.
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*Selections from*  
THOMAS PAINE

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## COMMON SENSE

### INTRODUCTION

Perhaps the sentiments contained in the following pages are not *yet* sufficiently fashionable to procure them general favor; a long habit of not thinking a thing *wrong* gives it a superficial appearance of being *right*, and raises at first a formidable outcry in defense of custom. But the tumult soon subsides. Time makes more converts than reason.

As a long and violent abuse of power is generally the means of calling the right of it in question (and in matters too which might never have been thought of, had not the sufferers been aggravated into the inquiry), and as the king of England hath undertaken in his *own right* to support the parliament in what he calls *theirs*, and as the good people of this country are grievously oppressed by the combination, they have an undoubted privilege to inquire into the pretensions of both, and equally to reject the usurpation of *either*.

In the following sheets, the author has studiously avoided everything which is personal among ourselves. Compliments as well as censure to individuals make no part thereof. The wise and the worthy need not the triumph of a pamphlet; and those whose sentiments are injudicious or unfriendly will cease of themselves, unless too much pains is bestowed upon their conversions.

The cause of America is, in a great measure, the cause of all mankind. Many circumstances have, and will arise, which are not local, but universal, and through which the principles of all lovers of mankind are affected, and in the event of which their affections are interested. The laying a country desolate with fire and sword, declaring war against the natural rights of all mankind, and extirpating the defenders thereof from the face of the earth, is the concern of every man to whom nature hath given the power of feeling; of which class, regardless of party censure, is

THE AUTHOR.

I. ON THE ORIGIN AND DESIGN OF GOVERNMENT IN GENERAL, WITH CONCISE REMARKS ON THE ENGLISH CONSTITUTION

Some writers have so confounded society with government as to leave little or no distinction between them; whereas they are not only different, but have different origins. Society is produced by our wants and government by our wickedness; the former promotes our happiness *positively* by uniting our affections, the latter *negatively* by restraining our vices. The one encourages intercourse, the other creates distinctions. The first is a patron, the last a punisher.

Society in every state is a blessing, but government, even in its best state, is but a necessary evil; in its worst state an intolerable one; for when we suffer or are exposed to the same miseries *by a government*, which we might expect in a country *without government*, our calamity is heightened by reflecting that we furnish the means by which we suffer. Government, like dress, is the badge of lost innocence; the palaces of kings are built upon the ruins of the bowers of paradise. For were the impulses of conscience clear, uniform, and irresistibly obeyed, man would need no other lawgiver; but that not being the case, he finds it necessary to surrender up a part of his property to furnish means for the protection of the rest; and this he is induced to do by the same prudence which in every other case advises him out of two evils to choose the least. *Wherefore*, security being the true design and end of government, it unanswerably follows that whatever *form* thereof appears most likely to ensure it to us, with the least expense and greatest benefit, is preferable to all others.

In order to gain a clear and just idea of the design and end of government, let us suppose a small number of persons settled in some sequestered part of the earth, unconnected with the rest; they will then represent the first peopling of any country, or of the world. In this state of natural liberty, society will be their first thought. A thousand motives will excite them thereto; the strength of one man is so unequal to his wants, and

his mind so unfitted for perpetual solitude, that he is soon obliged to seek assistance and relief of another, who in his turn requires the same. Four or five united would be able to raise a tolerable dwelling in the midst of a wilderness, but *one* man might labor out the common period of life without accomplishing anything; when he had felled his timber he could not remove it, nor erect it after it was removed; hunger in the meantime would urge him to quit his work, and every different want would call him a different way. Disease, nay even misfortune, would be death; for though neither might be mortal, yet either would disable him from living, and reduce him to a state in which he might rather be said to perish than to die.

Thus necessity, like a gravitating power, would soon form our newly arrived emigrants into society, the reciprocal blessings of which would supersede and render the obligations of law and government unnecessary while they remained perfectly just to each other; but as nothing but heaven is impregnable to vice, it will unavoidably happen that in proportion as they surmount the first difficulties of emigration, which bound them together in a common cause, they will begin to relax in their duty and attachment to each other; and this remissness will point out the necessity of establishing some form of government to supply the defect of moral virtue.

Some convenient tree will afford them a statehouse, under the branches of which the whole colony may assemble to deliberate on public matters. It is more than probable that their first laws will have the title only of REGULATIONS and be enforced by no other penalty than public disesteem. In this first parliament every man by natural right will have a seat.

But as the colony increases, the public concerns will increase likewise, and the distance at which the members may be separated will render it too inconvenient for all of them to meet on every occasion as at first, when their number was small, their habitations near, and the public concerns few and trifling. This will point out the convenience of their consenting to leave the legislative part to be managed by a select number chosen from the whole body, who are supposed to have the same concerns

at stake which those have who appointed them, and who will act in the same manner as the whole body would act were they present. If the colony continue increasing, it will become necessary to augment the number of representatives, and that the interest of every part of the colony may be attended to, it will be found best to divide the whole into convenient parts, each part sending its proper number; and that the *elected* might never form to themselves an interest separate from the *electors*, prudence will point out the propriety of having elections often, because as the *elected* might by that means return and mix again with the general body of the *electors* in a few months, their fidelity to the public will be secured by the prudent reflection of not making a rod for themselves. And as this frequent interchange will establish a common interest with every part of the community, they will mutually and naturally support each other, and on this (not on the unmeaning name of king) depends the *strength of government and the happiness of the governed*.

Here then is the origin and rise of government; namely, a mode rendered necessary by the inability of moral virtue to govern the world; here too is the design and end of government, viz., freedom and security. And however our eyes may be dazzled with show or our ears deceived by sound; however prejudice may warp our wills or interest darken our understanding, the simple voice of nature and reason will say, it is right.

I draw my idea of the form of government from a principle in nature which no art can overturn, viz. that the more simple anything is, the less liable it is to be disordered, and the easier repaired when disordered; and with this maxim in view, I offer a few remarks on the so much boasted constitution of England. That it was noble for the dark and slavish times in which it was erected, is granted. When the world was overrun with tyranny, the least remove therefrom was a glorious rescue. But that it is imperfect, subject to convulsions, and incapable of producing what it seems to promise, is easily demonstrated.

Absolute governments (though the disgrace of human nature) have this advantage with them, they are simple; if the people suffer, they know the head from which their suffering springs;

know likewise the remedy; and are not bewildered by a variety of causes and cures. But the constitution of England is so exceedingly complex that the nation may suffer for years together without being able to discover in which part the fault lies; some will say in one and some in another, and every political physician will advise a different medicine.

I know it is difficult to get over local or long standing prejudices, yet if we will suffer ourselves to examine the component parts of the English constitution, we shall find them to be the base remains of two ancient tyrannies, compounded with some new republican materials.

*First.*—The remains of monarchical tyranny in the person of the King.

*Secondly.*—The remains of aristocratical tyranny in the persons of the Peers.

*Thirdly.*—The new republican materials, in the persons of the Commons, on whose virtue depends the freedom of England.

The two first, by being hereditary, are independent of the people; wherefore in a *constitutional sense* they contribute nothing towards the freedom of the state.

To say that the constitution of England is a *union* of three powers, reciprocally *checking* each other, is farcical; either the words have no meaning, or they are flat contradictions.

To say that the commons is a check upon the king, presupposes two things.

*First.*—That the king is not to be trusted without being looked after; or in other words, that a thirst for absolute power is the natural disease of monarchy.

*Secondly.*—That the commons, by being appointed for that purpose, are either wiser or more worthy of confidence than the crown.

But as the same constitution which gives the commons a power to check the king by withholding the supplies, gives afterwards the king a power to check the commons, by empowering him to reject their other bills; it again supposes that the king is wiser than those whom it has already supposed to be wiser than him. A mere absurdity!

There is something exceedingly ridiculous in the composition of monarchy; it first excludes a man from the means of information, yet empowers him to act in cases where the highest judgment is required. The state of a king shuts him from the world, yet the business of a king requires him to know it thoroughly; wherefore the different parts, by unnaturally opposing and destroying each other, prove the whole character to be absurd and useless.

Some writers have explained the English constitution thus: the king, say they, is one, the people another; the peers are a house in behalf of the king, the commons in behalf of the people; but this hath all the distinctions of a house divided against itself; and though the expressions be pleasantly arranged, yet when examined they appear idle and ambiguous; and it will always happen that the nicest construction that words are capable of, when applied to the description of something which either cannot exist or is too incomprehensible to be within the compass of description, will be words of sound only, and though they may amuse the ear, they cannot inform the mind; for this explanation includes a previous question, *viz. how came the king by a power which the people are afraid to trust, and always obliged to check?* Such a power could not be the gift of a wise people, neither can any power, *which needs checking*, be from God; yet the provision which the constitution makes supposes such a power to exist.

But the provision is unequal to the task; the means either cannot or will not accomplish the end, and the whole affair is a *felo de se*; for as the greater weight will always carry up the less, and as all the wheels of a machine are put in motion by one, it only remains to know which power in the constitution has the most weight, for that will govern; and though the others, or a part of them, may clog, or check the rapidity of its motion, yet so long as they cannot stop it, their endeavors will be ineffectual; the first moving power will at last have its way, and what it wants in speed is supplied by time.

That the crown is this overbearing part in the English constitution needs not be mentioned, and that it derives its whole

consequence merely from being the giver of places and pensions is self-evident; wherefore, though we have been wise enough to shut and lock a door against absolute monarchy, we at the same time have been foolish enough to put the crown in possession of the key.

The prejudice of Englishmen in favor of their own government by king, lords, and commons, arises as much or more from national pride than reason. Individuals are undoubtedly safer in England than in some other countries: but the *will* of the king is as much the *law* of the land in Britain as in France, with this difference, that instead of proceeding directly from his mouth, it is handed to the people under the formidable shape of an act of parliament. For the fate of Charles the First hath only made kings more subtle—not more just.

Wherefore, laying aside all national pride and prejudice in favor of modes and forms, the plain truth is that *it is wholly to the constitution of the people, and not to the constitution of the government* that the crown is not as oppressive in England as in Turkey.

An inquiry into the *constitutional errors* in the English form of government is at this time highly necessary; for as we are never in a proper condition of doing justice to others while we continue under the influence of some leading partiality, so neither are we capable of doing it to ourselves while we remain fettered by any obstinate prejudice. And as a man who is attached to a prostitute is unfitted to choose or judge of a wife, so any prepossession in favor of a rotten constitution of government will disable us from discerning a good one.

## II. OF MONARCHY AND HEREDITARY SUCCESSION

Mankind being originally equals in the order of creation, the equality could only be destroyed by some subsequent circumstance: the distinctions of rich and poor may in a great measure be accounted for, and that without having recourse to the harsh ill-sounding names of oppression and avarice. Oppression is

often the *consequence*, but seldom or never the *means* of riches; and though avarice will preserve a man from being necessitously poor, it generally makes him too timorous to be wealthy.

But there is another and greater distinction for which no truly natural or religious reason can be assigned, and that is the distinction of men into *kings* and *subjects*. Male and female are the distinctions of nature, good and bad the distinctions of heaven; but how a race of men came into the world so exalted above the rest, and distinguished like some new species, is worth inquiring into, and whether they are the means of happiness or of misery to mankind.

In the early ages of the world, according to the Scripture chronology there were no kings; the consequence of which was there were no wars; it is the pride of kings which throws mankind into confusion. Holland without a king hath enjoyed more peace for this last century than any of the monarchical governments in Europe. Antiquity favors the same remark; for the quiet and rural lives of the first patriarchs have a happy something in them, which vanishes when we come to the history of Jewish royalty.

Government by kings was first introduced into the world by the heathens, from whom the children of Israel copied the custom. It was the most prosperous invention the Devil ever set on foot for the promotion of idolatry. The heathens paid divine honors to their deceased kings, and the Christian world has improved on the plan by doing the same to their living ones. How impious is the title of sacred Majesty applied to a worm, who in the midst of his splendor is crumbling into dust!

As the exalting one man so greatly above the rest cannot be justified on the equal rights of nature, so neither can it be defended on the authority of Scripture; for the will of the Almighty, as declared by Gideon and the prophet Samuel, expressly disapproves of government by kings. All anti-monarchical parts of Scripture have been very smoothly glossed over in monarchical governments, but they undoubtedly merit the attention of countries which have their governments yet to form. "*Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's,*" is the scripture

doctrine of courts, yet it is no support of monarchical government, for the Jews at that time were without a king, and in a state of vassalage to the Romans.

Near three thousand years passed away, from the Mosaic account of the creation, till the Jews under a national delusion requested a king. Till then their form of government (except in extraordinary cases where the Almighty interposed) was a kind of republic, administered by a judge and the elders of the tribes. Kings they had none, and it was held sinful to acknowledge any being under that title but the Lord of Hosts. And when a man seriously reflects on the idolatrous homage which is paid to the persons of kings, he need not wonder that the Almighty, ever jealous of his honor, should disapprove a form of government which so impiously invades the prerogative of heaven.

Monarchy is ranked in scripture as one of the sins of the Jews, for which a course in reserve is denounced against them. The history of that transaction is worth attending to.

The children of Israel being oppressed by the Midianites, Gideon marched against them with a small army, and victory through the Divine interposition decided in his favor. The Jews elate with success and attributing it to the generalship of Gideon, proposed making him a king, saying, *Rule thou over us, thou and thy son, and thy son's son.* Here was temptation in its fullest extent; not a kingdom only, but an hereditary one; but Gideon in the piety of his soul replied, *I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you.* THE LORD SHALL RULE OVER YOU. Words need not be more explicit; Gideon doth not *decline* the honor, but denieth their right to give it; neither doth he compliment them with invented declarations of his thanks, but in the positive style of a prophet charges them with disaffection to their proper sovereign, the King of Heaven.

About one hundred and thirty years after this, they fell again into the same error. The hankering which the Jews had for the idolatrous customs of the heathens is something exceedingly unaccountable; but so it was that laying hold of the misconduct of Samuel's two sons who were intrusted with some secular con-

cerns, they came in an abrupt and clamorous manner to Samuel, saying, *Behold thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways, now make us a king to judge us like all the other nations.* And here we cannot but observe that their motives were bad, viz. that they might be *like* unto other nations, i.e. the heathens, whereas their true glory lay in being as much *unlike* them as possible. *But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, give us a king to judge us; and Samuel prayed unto the Lord, and the Lord said unto Samuel, hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee, for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, THAT I SHOULD NOT REIGN OVER THEM.* According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other Gods: so do they also unto thee. Now therefore hearken unto their voice, howbeit, protest solemnly unto them and show them the manner of the king that shall reign over them, i.e. not of any particular king, but the general manner of the kings of the earth whom Israel was so eagerly copying after. And notwithstanding the great distance of time and difference of manners, the character is still in fashion. *And Samuel told all the words of the Lord unto the people, that asked of him a king. And he said, This shall be the manner of the king that shall reign over you. He will take your sons and appoint them for himself for his chariots and to be his horsemen, and some shall run before his chariots* (this description agrees with the present mode of impressing men) *and he will appoint him captains over thousands and captains over fifties, will set them to ear his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots. And he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers* (this describes the expense and luxury as well as the oppression of kings) *and he will take your fields and your vineyards, and your olive yards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants. And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give them to his officers and to his servants* (by which we see that bribery, corruption, and favoritism are the standing vices of kings) *and he will take the tenth of your men servants, and your maid servants,*

*and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work: and he will take the tenth of your sheep, and ye shall be his servants, and ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen, AND THE LORD WILL NOT HEAR YOU IN THAT DAY.* This accounts for the continuation of monarchy; neither do the characters of the few good kings which have lived since, either sanctify the title, or blot out the sinfulness of the origin; the high encomium given of David takes no notice of him *officially as a king*, but only as a *man* after God's own heart. *Nevertheless the People refused to obey the voice of Samuel, and they said, Nay but we will have a king over us, that we may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us, and go out before us and fight our battles.* Samuel continued to reason with them, but to no purpose; he set before them their ingratitude, but all would not avail; and seeing them fully bent on their folly, he cried out, *I will call unto the Lord, and he shall send thunder and rain* (which was then a punishment, being in the time of wheat harvest) *that ye may perceive and see that your wickedness is great which ye have done in the sight of the Lord, IN ASKING YOU A KING. So Samuel called unto the Lord, and the Lord sent thunder and rain that day, and all the people greatly feared the Lord and Samuel. And all the people said unto Samuel, Pray for thy servants unto the Lord thy God that we die not, for WE HAVE ADDED UNTO OUR SINS THIS EVIL, TO ASK A KING.* These portions of scripture are direct and positive. They admit of no equivocal construction. That the Almighty hath here entered his protest against monarchical government is true, or the scripture is false. And a man hath good reason to believe that there is as much of kingcraft as priestcraft in withholding the scripture from the public in popish countries. For monarchy in every instance is the popery of government.

To the evil of monarchy we have added that of hereditary succession; and as the first is a degradation and lessening of ourselves, so the second, claimed as a matter of right, is an insult and imposition on posterity. For all men being originally equals, no *one* by *birth* could have a right to set up his own family in perpetual preference to all others forever, and though

himself might deserve *some* decent degree of honors of his contemporaries, yet his descendants might be far too unworthy to inherit them. One of the strongest *natural* proofs of the folly of hereditary right in kings, is that nature disapproves it, otherwise she would not so frequently turn it into ridicule by giving mankind an *ass for a lion*.

Secondly, as no man at first could possess any other public honors than were bestowed upon him, so the givers of those honors could have no power to give away the right of posterity, and though they might say "we choose you for our head," they could not without manifest injustice to their children say "that your children and your children's children shall reign over our's forever." Because such an unwise, unjust, unnatural compact might (perhaps) in the next succession put them under the government of a rogue or a fool. Most wise men in their private sentiments have ever treated hereditary right with contempt; yet it is one of those evils which when once established is not easily removed; many submit from fear, others from superstition, and the more powerful part shares with the king the plunder of the rest.

This is supposing the present race of kings in the world to have had an honorable origin; whereas it is more than probable that, could we take off the dark covering of antiquity and trace them to their first rise, we should find the first of them nothing better than the principal ruffian of some restless gang, whose savage manners of pre-eminence in subtility obtained him the title of chief among plunderers; and who by increasing in power, and extending his depredations, overawed the quiet and defenseless to purchase their safety by frequent contributions. Yet his electors could have no idea of giving hereditary right to his descendants, because such a perpetual exclusion of themselves was incompatible with the free and unrestrained principles they professed to live by. Wherefore, hereditary succession in the early ages of monarchy could not take place as a matter of claim, but as something casual or complementary; but as few or no records were extant in those days, and traditionary history stuffed with fables, it was very easy, after the lapse of a few gen-

erations, to trump up some superstitious tale conveniently timed, Mahomet-like, to cram hereditary right down the throats of the vulgar. Perhaps the disorders which threatened, or seemed to threaten, on the decease of a leader and the choice of a new one (for elections among ruffians could not be very orderly) induced many at first to favor hereditary pretensions; by which means it happened, as it hath happened since, that what at first was submitted to as a convenience was afterwards claimed as a right.

England, since the conquest, hath known some few good monarchs, but groaned beneath a much larger number of bad ones; yet no man in his senses can say that their claim under William the Conqueror is a very honorable one. A French bastard, landing with an armed banditti and establishing himself king of England against the consent of the natives, is in plain terms a very paltry rascally original. It certainly hath no divinity in it. However it is needless to spend much time in exposing the folly of hereditary right; if there are any so weak as to believe it, let them promiscuously worship the Ass and the Lion, and welcome. I shall neither copy their humility, nor disturb their devotion.

Yet I should be glad to ask how they suppose kings came at first? The question admits but of three answers, viz., either by lot, by election, or by usurpation. If the first king was taken by lot, it establishes a precedent for the next, which excludes hereditary succession. Saul was by lot, yet the succession was not hereditary, neither does it appear from that transaction that there was any intention it ever should. If the first king of any country was by election that likewise establishes a precedent for the next; for to say that the right of all future generations is taken away by the act of the first electors in their choice not only of a king, but of a family of kings forever, hath no parallel in or out of scripture but the doctrine of original sin, which supposes the free will of all men lost in Adam; and from such comparison, and it will admit of no other, hereditary succession can derive no glory. For as in Adam all sinned, and as in the first electors all men obeyed; as in the one all mankind were sub-

jected to Satan, and in the other to sovereignty; as our innocence was lost in the first, and our authority in the last; and as both disable us from reassuming some former state and privilege, it unanswerably follows that original sin and hereditary succession are parallels. Dishonorable rank! inglorious connection! yet the most subtle sophist cannot produce a juster simile.

As to usurpation, no man will be so hardy as to defend it; and that William the Conqueror was a usurper is a fact not to be contradicted. The plain truth is, that the antiquity of English monarchy will not bear looking into.

But it is not so much the absurdity as the evil of hereditary succession which concerns mankind. Did it insure a race of good and wise men it would have the seal of divine authority, but as it opens a door to the *foolish*, the *wicked*, and the *improper*, it hath in it the nature of oppression. Men who look upon themselves born to reign, and others to obey, soon grow insolent. Selected from the rest of mankind, their minds are early poisoned by importance; and the world they act in differs so materially from the world at large that they have but little opportunity of knowing its true interest, and when they succeed to the government are frequently the most ignorant and unfit of any throughout the dominions.

Another evil which attends hereditary succession is, that the throne is subject to be possessed by a minor at any age; all which time the regency, acting under the cover of a king, have every opportunity and inducement to betray their trust. The same national misfortune happens when a king, worn out with age and infirmity, enters the last stage of human weakness. In both these cases the public becomes a prey to every miscreant who can temper successfully with the follies either of age or infancy.

The most plausible plea which hath ever been offered in favor of hereditary succession is that it preserves a nation from civil wars; and were this true, it would be weighty; whereas, it is the most barefaced falsity ever imposed upon mankind. The whole history of England disowns the fact. Thirty kings and two minors have reigned in that distracted kingdom since the conquest, in which time there have been (including the Revolution)

no less than eight civil wars and nineteen rebellions. Wherefore instead of making for peace, it makes against it, and destroys the very foundation it seems to stand upon.

The contest for monarchy and succession between the houses of York and Lancaster laid England in a scene of blood for many years. Twelve pitched battles, besides skirmishes and sieges, were fought between Henry and Edward. Twice was Henry prisoner to Edward, who in his turn was prisoner to Henry. And so uncertain is the fate of war and the temper of a nation, when nothing but personal matters are the ground of a quarrel, that Henry was taken in triumph from a prison to a palace, and Edward obliged to fly from a palace to a foreign land; yet, as sudden transitions of temper are seldom lasting, Henry in his turn was driven from the throne, and Edward recalled to succeed him. The parliament always following the strongest side.

This contest began in the reign of Henry the Sixth, and was not entirely extinguished till Henry the Seventh, in whom the families were united. Including a period of sixty-seven years, viz., from 1422 to 1489.

In short, monarchy and succession have laid (not this or that kingdom only) but the world in blood and ashes. 'Tis a form of government which the word of God bears testimony against, and blood will attend it.

If we inquire into the business of a king, we shall find (in some countries they may have none) that after sauntering away their lives without pleasure to themselves or advantages to the nation, they withdraw from the scene, and leave their successors to tread the same idle round. In absolute monarchies the whole weight of business, civil and military, lies on the king; the children of Israel in their request for a king urged this plea, "that he may judge us, and go out before us and fight our battles." But in countries where he is neither a judge nor a general, as in England, a man would be puzzled to know what *is* his business.

The nearer any government approaches to a republic, the less business there is for a king. It is somewhat difficult to find a proper name for the government of England. Sir William

Meredith calls it a republic; but in its present state it is unworthy of the name, because the corrupt influence of the crown, by having all the places in its disposal, hath so effectually swallowed up the power, and eaten out the virtue of the House of Commons (the republican part in the constitution) that the government of England is nearly as monarchical as that of France or Spain. Men fall out with names without understanding them. For 'tis the republican and not the monarchical part of the constitution of England which Englishmen glory in, viz. the liberty of choosing a house of commons from out of their own body—and it is easy to see that when republican virtues fail, slavery ensues. Why is the constitution of England sickly but because monarchy hath poisoned the republic, the crown has engrossed the commons?

In England a king hath little more to do than to make war and give away places; which in plain terms is to impoverish the nation and set it together by the ears. A pretty business indeed for a man to be allowed eight hundred thousand sterling a year for, and worshipped into the bargain! Of more worth is one honest man to society, and in the sight of God, than all the crowned ruffians that ever lived.

### III. THOUGHTS ON THE PRESENT STATE OF AMERICAN AFFAIRS

In the following pages I offer nothing more than simple facts, plain arguments, and common sense; and have no other preliminaries to settle with the reader, than that he will divest himself of prejudice and prepossession, and suffer his reason and his feelings to determine for themselves; that he will put on, or rather that he will not put off, the true character of a man, and generously enlarge his views beyond the present day.

Volumes have been written on the subject of the struggle between England and America. Men of all ranks have embarked in the controversy, from different motives, and with various designs; but all have been ineffectual, and the period of debate is closed. Arms as the last resource decide the contest; the appeal

was the choice of the king, and the continent has accepted the challenge.

It hath been reported of the late Mr. Pelham (who though an able minister was not without his faults) that on his being attacked in the House of Commons on the score that his measures were only of a temporary kind, replied, "*They will last my time.*" Should a thought so fatal and unmanly possess the colonies in the present contest, the name of ancestors will be remembered by future generations with detestation.

The sun never shined on a cause of greater worth. 'Tis not the affair of a city, a county, a province, or a kingdom; but of a continent—of at least one-eighth part of the habitable globe. 'Tis not the concern of a day, a year, or an age; posterity are virtually involved in the contest, and will be more or less affected even to the end of time by the proceedings now. Now is the seedtime of continental union, faith, and honor. The least fracture now will be like a name engraved with the point of a pin on the tender rind of a young oak; the wound would enlarge with the tree, and posterity read it in full grown characters.

By referring the matter from argument to arms, a new era for politics is struck—a new method of thinking has arisen. All plans, proposals, &c. prior to the nineteenth of April, i.e. to the commencement of hostilities, are like the almanacks of the last year; which though proper then, are superseded and useless now. Whatever was advanced by the advocates on either side of the question then, terminated in one and the same point, viz. a union with Great Britain; the only difference between the parties was the method of effecting it; the one proposing force, the other friendship; but it has so far happened that the first has failed, and the second has withdrawn her influence.

As much has been said of the advantages of reconciliation, which, like an agreeable dream, has passed away and left us as we were, it is but right that we should examine the contrary side of the argument, and inquire into some of them any material injuries which these colonies sustain, and always will sustain, by being connected with and dependent on Great Britain. To examine that connection and dependence on the principles of

nature and common sense; to see what we have to trust to, if separated, and what we are to expect, if dependent.

I have heard it asserted by some, that as America has flourished under her former connection with Great Britain, the same connection is necessary towards her future happiness, and will always have the same effect. Nothing can be more fallacious than this kind of argument. We may as well assert that because a child has thrived upon milk, that it is never to have meat, or that the first twenty years of our lives is to become a precedent for the next twenty. But even this is admitting more than is true; for I answer roundly that America would have flourished as much, and probably much more, had no European power taken any notice of her. The commerce by which she hath enriched herself are the necessities of life, and will always have a market while eating is the custom of Europe.

But she has protected us, say some. That she hath engrossed us is true, and defended the continent at our expense as well as her own is admitted; and she would have defended Turkey from the same motive, viz. for the sake of trade and dominion.

Alas! we have been long led away by ancient prejudices and made large sacrifices to superstition. We have boasted the protection of Great Britain without considering that her motive was *interest*, not *attachment*; and that she did not protect us from *our enemies on our account*, but from her enemies on her own account, from those who had no quarrel with us on any *other account*, and who will always be our enemies on the *same account*. Let Britain waive her pretensions to the continent, or the continent throw off the dependence, and we should be at peace with France and Spain were they at war with Britain. The miseries of Hanover's last war ought to warn us against connections.

It hath lately been asserted in parliament, that the colonies have no relation to each other but through the parent country, i.e. that Pennsylvania and the Jerseys, and so on for the rest, are sister colonies by the way of England; this is certainly a very roundabout way of proving relationship, but it is the nearest and only true way of proving enmity (or enemyship, if I may so call

it). France and Spain never were, nor perhaps ever will be, our enemies as *Americans*, but as our being the *subjects of Great Britain*.

But Britain is the parent country, say some. Then the more shame upon her conduct. Even brutes do not devour their young, nor savages make war upon their families; wherefore, the assertion, if true, turns to her reproach; but it happens not to be true, or only partly so, and the phrase *parent* or *mother country* hath been jesuitically adopted by the king and his parasites, with a low papistical design of gaining an unfair bias on the credulous weakness of our minds. Europe, and not England, is the parent country of America. This new world hath been the asylum for the persecuted lovers of civil and religious liberty from *every part* of Europe. Hither have they fled, not from the tender embraces of the mother, but from the cruelty of the monster; and it is so far true of England, that the same tyranny which drove the first emigrants from home pursues their descendants still.

In this extensive quarter of the globe, we forget the narrow limits of three hundred and sixty miles (the extent of England) and carry our friendship on a larger scale; we claim brotherhood with every European Christian, and triumph in the generosity of the sentiment.

It is pleasant to observe by what regular gradations we surmount the force of local prejudices as we enlarge our acquaintance with the world. A man born in any town in England divided into parishes, will naturally associate most with his fellow parishioners (because their interests in many cases will be common) and distinguish him by the name of *neighbor*; if he meet him but a few miles from home, he drops the narrow idea of a street, and salutes him by the name of *townsman*; if he travel out of the county and meet him in any other, he forgets the minor divisions of street and town, and calls him *country-man*, i.e. *county-man*; but if in their foreign excursions they should associate in France, or any other part of *Europe*, their local remembrance would be enlarged into that of *Englishman*. And by a just parity of reasoning, all Europeans meeting in America,

or any other quarter of the globe, are *countrymen*; for England, Holland, Germany, or Sweden, when compared with the whole, stand in the same places on the larger scale, which the divisions of street, town, and county do on the smaller ones; distinctions too limited for continental minds. Not one third of the inhabitants, even of this province, are of English descent. Wherefore, I reprobate the phrase of parent or mother country applied to England only, as being false, selfish, narrow, and ungenerous.

But, admitting that we were all of English descent, what does it amount to? Nothing. Britain, being now an open enemy, extinguishes every other name and title; and to say that reconciliation is our duty, is truly farcical. The first king of England, of the present line (William the Conqueror) was a Frenchman, and half the peers of England are descendants from the same country; wherefore, by the same method of reasoning, England ought to be governed by France.

Much hath been said of the united strength of Britain and the colonies, that in conjunction they might bid defiance to the world. But this is mere presumption, the fate of war is uncertain; neither do the expressions mean anything, for this continent would never suffer itself to be drained of inhabitants to support the British arms in either Asia, Africa, or Europe.

Besides, what have we to do with setting the world at defiance? Our plan is commerce, and that, well attended to, will secure us the peace and friendship of all Europe; because it is the interest of all Europe to have America a *free port*. Her trade will always be a protection, and her barrenness of gold and silver secure her from invaders.

I challenge the warmest advocate for reconciliation to show a single advantage that this continent can reap, by being connected with Great Britain. I repeat the challenge, not a single advantage is derived. Our corn will fetch its price in any market in Europe, and our imported goods must be paid for, buy them where we will.

But the injuries and disadvantages which we sustain by that connection are without number; and our duty to mankind at large, as well as to ourselves, instruct us to renounce the alliance:

because any submission to, or dependence on, Great Britain, tends directly to involve this continent in European wars and quarrels, and set us at variance with nations who would otherwise seek our friendship, and against whom we have neither anger nor complaint. As Europe is our market for trade, we ought to form no partial connection with any part of it. 'Tis the true interest of America to steer clear of European contentions, which she never can do while by her dependence on Britain she is made the makeweight in the scale of British politics.

Europe is too thickly planted with kingdoms to be long at peace, and whenever a war breaks out between England and any foreign power, the trade of America goes to ruin, *because of her connection with Britain*. The next war may not turn out like the last, and should it not, the advocates for reconciliation now will be wishing for separation then, because neutrality in that case would be a safer convoy than a man of war. Everything that is right or reasonable pleads for separation. The blood of the slain, the weeping voice of nature cries, 'TIS TIME TO PART. Even the distance at which the Almighty hath placed England and America is a strong and natural proof that the authority of the one over the other, was never the design of heaven. The time likewise at which the continent was discovered, adds weight to the argument, and the manner in which it was peopled, increases the force of it. The Reformation was preceded by the discovery of America, as if the Almighty graciously meant to open a sanctuary to the persecuted in future years, when home should afford neither friendship nor safety.

The authority of Great Britain over this continent is a form of government which sooner or later must have an end. And a serious mind can draw no true pleasure by looking forward, under the painful and positive conviction that what he calls "the present constitution" is merely temporary. As parents, we can have no joy, knowing that *this government* is not sufficiently lasting to insure anything which we may bequeath to posterity; and by a plain method of argument, as we are running the next generation into debt, we ought to do the work of it, otherwise we use them meanly and pitifully. In order to discover the line

of our duty rightly, we should take our children in our hand, and fix our station a few years farther into life; that eminence will present a prospect which a few present fears and prejudices conceal from our sight.

Though I would carefully avoid giving unnecessary offense, yet I am inclined to believe that all those who espouse the doctrine of reconciliation may be included within the following descriptions: Interested men, who are not to be trusted, weak men who *cannot* see, prejudiced men who *will not* see, and a certain set of moderate men who think better of the European world than it deserves; and this last class, by an ill-judged deliberation, will be the cause of more calamities to this continent than all the other three.

It is the good fortune of many to live distant from the scene of present sorrow; the evil is not sufficiently brought to *their* doors to make *them* feel the precariousness with which all American property is possessed. But let our imaginations transport us a few moments to Boston; that seat of wretchedness will teach us wisdom, and instruct us forever to renounce a power in whom we can have no trust. The inhabitants of that unfortunate city, who but a few months ago were in ease and affluence, have now no other alternative than to stay and starve, or turn out to beg. Endangered by the fire of their friends if they continue within the city, and plundered by the soldiery if they leave it, in their present situation they are prisoners without the hope of redemption, and in a general attack for their relief they would be exposed to the fury of both armies.

Men of passive tempers look somewhat lightly over the offenses of Great Britain, and, still hoping for the best, are apt to call out, *Come, come, we shall be friends again for all this*. But examine the passions and feelings of mankind; bring the doctrine of reconciliation to the touchstone of nature, and then tell ~~me~~ whether you can hereafter love, honor, and faithfully serve the power that hath carried fire and sword into your land? If you cannot do all these, then are you only deceiving yourselves, and by your delay bringing ruin upon posterity. Your future connection with Britain, whom you can neither love nor honor,

will be forced and unnatural, and being formed only on the plan of present convenience, will in a little time fall into a relapse more wretched than the first. But if you say you can still pass the violations over, then I ask, Hath your house been burnt? Hath your property been destroyed before your face? Are your wife and children destitute of a bed to lie on, or bread to live on? Have you lost a parent or child by their hands, and yourself the ruined and wretched survivor? If you have not, then are you not a judge of those who have. But if you have, and can still shake hands with the murderers, then are you unworthy the name of husband, father, friend, or lover; and whatever may be your rank or title in life, you have the heart of a coward, and the spirit of a sycophant.

This is not inflaming or exaggerating matters, but trying them by those feelings and affections which nature justifies, and without which we should be incapable of discharging the social duties of life, or enjoying the felicities of it. I mean not to exhibit horror for the purpose of provoking revenge, but to awaken us from fatal and unmanly slumbers, that we may pursue determinately some fixed object. 'Tis not in the power of Britain or of Europe to conquer America, if she doth not conquer herself by *delay* and *timidity*. The present winter is worth an age if rightly employed, but if lost or neglected the whole continent will partake of the misfortune; and there is no punishment which that man doth not deserve, be he who, or what, or where he will, that may be the means of sacrificing a season so precious and useful.

It is repugnant to reason, to the universal order of things, to all examples from former ages, to suppose that this continent can long remain subject to any external power. The most sanguine in Britain doth not think so. The utmost stretch of human wisdom cannot, at this time, compass a plan, short of separation, which can promise the continent even a year's security. Reconciliation is *now* a fallacious dream. Nature has deserted the connection, and art cannot supply her place. For, as Milton wisely expresses, "Never can true reconcilment grow where wounds of deadly hate have pierced so deep."

Every quiet method for peace hath been ineffectual. Our prayers have been rejected with disdain; and have tended to convince us that nothing flatters vanity or confirms obstinacy in kings more than repeated petitioning—and nothing hath contributed more than that very measure to make the kings of Europe absolute. Witness Denmark and Sweden. Wherefore, since nothing but blows will do, for God's sake let us come to a final separation, and not leave the next generation to be cutting throats under the violated unmeaning names of parent and child.

To say they will never attempt it again is idle and visionary; we thought so at the repeal of the stamp act, yet a year or two undeceived us; as well may we suppose that nations which have been once defeated will never renew the quarrel.

As to government matters, it is not in the power of Britain to do this continent justice: the business of it will soon be too weighty and intricate to be managed with any tolerable degree of convenience, by a power so distant from us, and so very ignorant of us; for if they cannot conquer us they cannot govern us. To be always running three or four thousand miles with a tale or a petition, waiting four or five months for an answer, which, when obtained, requires five or six more to explain it in, will in a few years be looked upon as folly and childishness. There was a time when it was proper, and there is a proper time for it to cease.

Small islands not capable of protecting themselves are the proper objects for government to take under their care; but there is something absurd in supposing a continent to be perpetually governed by an island. In no instance hath nature made the satellite larger than its primary planet; and as England and America, with respect to each other, reverse the common order of nature, it is evident that they belong to different systems. England to Europe: America to itself.

I am not induced by motives of pride, party, or resentment to espouse the doctrine of separation and independence; I am clearly, positively, and conscientiously persuaded that 'tis the true interest of this continent to be so; that everything short of *that* is mere patchwork, that it can afford no lasting felicity—

that it is leaving the sword to our children, and shrinking back at a time when a little more, a little further, would have rendered this continent the glory of the earth.

As Britain hath not manifested the least inclination towards a compromise, we may be assured that no terms can be obtained worthy the acceptance of the continent, or any ways equal to the expense of blood and treasure we have been already put to.

The object contended for ought always to bear some just proportion to the expense. The removal of North, or the whole detestable junto, is a matter unworthy the millions we have expended. A temporary stoppage of trade was an inconvenience which would have sufficiently balanced the repeal of all the acts complained of, had such repeals been obtained; but if the whole continent must take up arms, if every man must be a soldier, 'tis scarcely worth our while to fight against a contemptible ministry only. Dearly, dearly do we pay for the repeal of the acts, if that is all we fight for; for, in a just estimation, 'tis as great a folly to pay a Bunker-hill price for law as for land. As I have always considered the independency of this continent an event which sooner or later must arrive, so from the late rapid progress of the continent to maturity, the event cannot be far off. Wherefore, on the breaking out of hostilities, it was not worth the while to have disputed a matter which time would have finally redressed, unless we meant to be in earnest; otherwise it is like wasting an estate on a suit at law, to regulate the trespasses of a tenant whose lease is just expiring. No man was a warmer wisher for a reconciliation than myself, before the fatal nineteenth of April, 1775, but the moment the event of that day was made known, I rejected the hardened, sullen-tempered Pharaoh of England forever; and disdain the wretch, that with the pretended title of FATHER OF HIS PEOPLE can unfeelingly hear of their slaughter, and composedly sleep with their blood upon his soul.

But admitting that matters were now made up, what would be the event? I answer, the ruin of the continent. And that for several reasons.

*First.* The powers of governing still remaining in the hands

of the king, he will have a negative over the whole legislation of this continent. And as he hath shown himself such an inveterate enemy to liberty, and discovered such a thirst for arbitrary power, is he, or is he not, a proper person to say to these colonies, *You shall make no laws but what I please!* And is there any inhabitant of America so ignorant as not to know, that according to what is called the *present constitution*, this continent can make no laws but what the king gives leave to; and is there any man so unwise as not to see, that (considering what has happened) he will suffer no law to be made here but such as suits *his* purpose? We may be as effectually enslaved by the want of laws in America, as by submitting to laws made for us in England. After matters are made up (as it is called), can there be any doubt but the whole power of the crown will be exerted to keep this continent as low and humble as possible? Instead of going forward we shall go backward, or be perpetually quarrelling, or ridiculously petitioning. We are already greater than the king wishes us to be, and will he not hereafter endeavor to make us less? To bring the matter to one point, Is the power who is jealous of our prosperity, a proper power to govern us? Whoever says *No* to this question is an independent, for independency means no more than this, whether we shall make our own laws, or whether the king, the greatest enemy this continent hath, or can have, shall tell us, *There shall be no laws but such as I like.*

But the king, you'll say, has a negative in England; the people there can make no laws without his consent. In point of right and good order, it is something very ridiculous that a youth of twenty-one (which hath often happened) shall say to several millions of people older and wiser than himself, "I forbid this or that act of yours to be law." But in this place I decline this sort of reply, though I will never cease to expose the absurdity of it, and only answer that England being the king's residence, and America not so, makes quite another case. The king's negative here is ten times more dangerous and fatal than it can be in England; for *there* he will scarcely refuse his consent to a bill for putting England into as strong a state of defense as

possible, and in America he would never suffer such a bill to be passed.

America is only a secondary object in the system of British politics, England consults the good of *this* country no further than it answers her *own* purpose. Wherefore, her own interest leads her to suppress the growth of *ours* in every case which doth not promote *her* advantage, or in the least interfere with it. A pretty state we should soon be in under such a secondhand government, considering what has happened! Men do not change from enemies to friends by the alteration of a name: and in order to show that reconciliation *now* is a dangerous doctrine, I affirm *that it would be policy in the king at this time to repeal the acts for the sake of reinstating himself in the government of the provinces*; in order that HE MAY ACCOMPLISH BY CRAFT AND SUBTLETY, IN THE LONG RUN, WHAT HE CANNOT DO BY FORCE AND VIOLENCE IN THE SHORT ONE. Reconciliation and ruin are nearly related.

*Secondly.* That as even the best terms which we can expect to obtain can amount to no more than a temporary expedient, or a kind of government by guardianship, which can last no longer than till the colonies come of age, so the general face and state of things in the interim will be unsettled and unpromising. Emigrants of property will not choose to come to a country whose form of government hangs but by a thread, and who is every day tottering on the brink of commotion and disturbance; and numbers of the present inhabitants would lay hold of the interval to dispose of their effects, and quit the continent.

But the most powerful of all arguments is, that nothing but independence, i.e. a continental form of government, can keep the peace of the continent and preserve it inviolate from civil wars. I dread the event of a reconciliation with Britain *now*, as it is more than probable that it will be followed by a revolt somewhere or other, the consequences of which may be far more fatal than all the malice of Britain.

Thousands are already ruined by British barbarity; (thousands more will probably suffer the same fate). Those men have other feelings than us who have nothing suffered. All

they *now* possess is liberty; what they before enjoyed is sacrificed to its service, and having nothing more to lose they disdain submission. Besides, the general temper of the colonies towards a British government will be like that of a youth who is nearly out of his time; they will care very little about her. And a government which cannot preserve the peace is no government at all, and in that case we pay our money for nothing; and pray what is it that Britain can do, whose power will be wholly on paper, should a civil tumult break out the very day after reconciliation? I have heard some men say, many of whom I believe spoke without thinking, that they dreaded an independence, fearing that it would produce civil wars. It is but seldom that our first thoughts are truly correct, and that is the case here; for there is ten times more to dread from a patched up connection than from independence. I make the sufferer's case my own, and I protest, that were I driven from house and home, my property destroyed, and my circumstances ruined, that as a man, sensible of injuries, I could never relish the doctrine of reconciliation, or consider myself bound thereby.

The colonies have manifested such a spirit of good order and obedience to continental government as is sufficient to make every reasonable person easy and happy on that head. No man can assign the least pretense for his fears on any other grounds than such as are truly childish and ridiculous, viz., that one colony will be striving for superiority over another.

Where there are no distinctions there can be no superiority; perfect equality affords no temptation. The republics of Europe are all (and we may say always) in peace. Holland and Switzerland are without wars, foreign or domestic. Monarchical governments, it is true, are never long at rest: the crown itself is a temptation to enterprising ruffians at *home*; and that degree of pride and insolence ever attendant on regal authority, swells into a rupture with foreign powers in instances where a republican government, by being formed on more natural principles, would negotiate the mistake.

If there is any true cause of fear respecting independence, it is because no plan is yet laid down. Men do not see their way

out. Wherefore, as an opening into that business I offer the following hints; at the same time modestly affirming that I have no other opinion of them myself than that they may be the means of giving rise to something better. Could the straggling thoughts of individuals be collected, they would frequently form materials for wise and able men to improve into useful matter.

Let the assemblies be annual, with a president only. The representation more equal, their business wholly domestic, and subject to the authority of a continental congress.

Let each colony be divided into six, eight, or ten, convenient districts, each district to send a proper number of delegates to congress, so that each colony send at least thirty. The whole number in congress will be at least 390. Each congress to sit and to choose a president by the following method. When the delegates are met, let a colony be taken from the whole thirteen colonies by lot, after which let the congress choose (by ballot) a president from out of the delegates of that province. In the next congress, let a colony be taken by lot from twelve only, omitting that colony from which the president was taken in the former congress, and so proceeding on till the whole thirteen shall have had their proper rotation. And in order that nothing may pass into a law but what is satisfactorily just, not less than three fifths of the congress to be called a majority. He that will promote discord, under a government so equally formed as this, would have joined Lucifer in his revolt.

But as there is a peculiar delicacy from whom, or in what manner, this business must first arise, and as it seems most agreeable and consistent that it should come from some intermediate body between the governed and the governors, that is, between the congress and the people, let a CONTINENTAL CONFERENCE be held in the following manner, and for the following purpose:

A committee of twenty-six members of congress, viz., two for each colony. Two members from each house of assembly, or provincial convention; and five representatives of the people at large, to be chosen in the capital city or town of each province,

for, and in behalf of the whole province, by as many qualified voters as shall think proper to attend from all parts of the province for that purpose; or, if more convenient, the representatives may be chosen in two or three of the most populous parts thereof. In this CONFERENCE, thus assembled, will be united the two grand principles of business, *knowledge* and *power*. The members of congress, assemblies, or conventions, by having had experience in national concerns, will be able and useful counsellors, and the whole, being empowered by the people, will have a truly legal authority.

The conferring members being met, let their business be to frame a CONTINENTAL CHARTER, or Charter of the United Colonies (answering to what is called the Magna Charta of England); fixing the number and manner of choosing members of congress, members of assembly, with their date of sitting, and drawing the line of business and jurisdiction between them (always remembering, that our strength is continental, not provincial); securing freedom and property to all men, and above all things the free exercise of religion, according to the dictates of conscience; with such other matter as it is necessary for a charter to contain. Immediately after which, the said conference to dissolve, and the bodies which shall be chosen conformable to the said charter, to be the legislators and governors of this continent for the time being: Whose peace and happiness, may God preserve. AMEN.

Should any body of men be hereafter delegated for this or some similar purpose, I offer them the following extracts from that wise observer on governments, Dragonetti. "The science," says he, "of the politician consists in fixing the true point of happiness and freedom. Those men would deserve the gratitude of ages, who should discover a mode of government that contained the greatest sum of individual happiness, with the least national expense."<sup>1</sup>

But where, say some, is the king of America? I'll tell you, friend, he reigns above, and doth not make havoc of mankind

<sup>1</sup>Dragonetti on "Virtues and Rewards." [Paine's note.]

like the Royal Brute of Great Britain. Yet that we may not appear to be defective even in earthly honors, let a day be solemnly set apart for proclaiming the charter; let it be brought forth placed on the divine law, the Word of God; let a crown be placed thereon, by which the world may know, that so far as we approve of monarchy, that in America THE LAW IS KING. For as in absolute governments the king is law, so in free countries the law *ought* to be king, and there ought to be no other. But lest any ill use should afterwards arise, let the crown at the conclusion of the ceremony be demolished, and scattered among the people whose right it is.

A government of our own is our natural right; and when a man seriously reflects on the precariousness of human affairs, he will become convinced, that it is infinitely wiser and safer to form a constitution of our own in a cool deliberate manner, while we have it in our power, than to trust such an interesting event to time and chance. If we omit it now, some Massanello<sup>1</sup> may hereafter arise, who, laying hold of popular disquietudes, may collect together the desperate and the discontented, and by assuming to themselves the powers of government, finally sweep away the liberties of the continent like a deluge. Should the government of America return again into the hands of Britain, the tottering situation of things will be a temptation for some desperate adventurer to try his fortune; and in such a case, what relief can Britain give? Ere she could hear the news, the fatal business might be done; and ourselves suffering like the wretched Britons under the oppression of the conqueror. Ye that oppose independence now, ye know not what ye do; ye are opening a door to eternal tyranny by keeping vacant the seat of government. There are thousands and tens of thousands who would think it glorious to expel from the continent that barbarous and hellish power which hath stirred up the

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Anello, otherwise Massanello, a fisherman of Naples, who after spiriting up his countrymen in the public market place, against the oppression of the Spaniards, to whom the place was then subject, prompted them to revolts, and in the space of a day became king. [Paine's note.]

Indians and the Negroes to destroy us; the cruelty hath a double guilt, it is dealing brutally by us, and treacherously by them.

To talk of friendship with those in whom our reason forbids us to have faith, and our affections wounded through a thousand pores instruct us to detest, is madness and folly. Every day wears out the little remains of kindred between us and them; and can there be any reason to hope that as the relationship expires the affection will increase, or that we shall agree better when we have ten times more and greater concerns to quarrel over than ever?

Ye that tell us of harmony and reconciliation, can ye restore to us the time that is past? Can ye give to prostitution its former innocence? Neither can ye reconcile Britain and America. The last cord now is broken, the people of England are presenting addresses against us. There are injuries which nature cannot forgive; she would cease to be nature if she did. As well can the lover forgive the ravisher of his mistress, as the continent forgive the murders of Britain. The Almighty hath implanted in us these inextinguishable feelings for good and wise purposes. They are the guardians of his image in our hearts. They distinguish us from the herd of common animals. The social compact would dissolve, and justice be extirpated from the earth, or have only a casual existence, were we callous to the touches of affection. The robber and the murderer would often escape unpunished, did not the injuries which our tempers sustain, provoke us into justice.

O ye that love mankind! Ye that dare oppose not only the tyranny but the tyrant, stand forth! Every spot of the old world is overrun with oppression. Freedom hath been hunted round the globe. Asia and Africa have long expelled her. Europe regards her like a stranger, and England hath given her warning to depart. O receive the fugitive, and prepare in time an asylum for mankind.

IV. OF THE PRESENT ABILITY OF AMERICA,  
WITH SOME MISCELLANEOUS REFLECTIONS

I have never met a man either in England or America who hath not confessed his opinion that a separation between the countries would take place, one time or other. And there is no instance in which we have shown less judgment than in endeavoring to describe what we call the ripeness or fitness of the continent for independence.

As all men allow the measure, and vary only in their opinion of the time, let us, in order to remove mistakes, take a general survey of things, and endeavor if possible to find out the very time. But I need not go far, the inquiry ceases at once, for the *time hath found us*. The general concurrence, the glorious union of all things, proves the fact.

It is not in numbers but in unity that our great strength lies; yet our present numbers are sufficient to repel the force of all the world. The continent has at this time the largest body of armed and disciplined men of any power under heaven; and is just arrived at that pitch of strength, in which no single colony is able to support itself, and the whole, when united, is able to do anything. Our land force is more than sufficient, and as to naval affairs, we cannot be insensible that Britain would never suffer an American man of war to be built while the continent remained in her hands. Wherefore, we should be no forwarder a hundred years hence in that branch than we are now; but the truth is, we should be less so, because the timber of the country is every day diminishing.

Were the continent crowded with inhabitants, her sufferings under the present circumstances would be intolerable. The more seaport-towns we had, the more should we have both to defend and to lose. Our present numbers are so happily proportioned to our wants that no man need be idle. The diminution of trade affords an army, and the necessities of an army create a new trade.

Debts we have none; and whatever we may contract on this account will serve as a glorious memento of our virtue. Can

board, though her complement of men was upwards of two hundred. A few able and social sailors will soon instruct a sufficient number of active landmen in the common work of a ship. Wherefore we never can be more capable of beginning on maritime matters than now, while our timber is standing, our fisheries blocked up, and our sailors and shipwrights out of employ. Men of war of seventy and eighty guns were built forty years ago in New England, and why not the same now? Shipbuilding is America's greatest pride, and in which she will, in time, excel the whole world. The great empires of the east are mostly inland and consequently excluded from the possibility of rivalling her. Africa is in a state of barbarism; and no power in Europe hath either such an extent of coast or such an internal supply of materials. Where nature hath given the one, she hath withheld the other; to America only hath she been liberal of both. The vast empire of Russia is almost shut out from the sea; wherefore her boundless forests, her tar, iron, and cordage are only articles of commerce.

In point of safety, ought we to be without a fleet? We are not the little people now which we were sixty years ago; at that time we might have trusted our property in the streets, or fields rather, and slept securely without locks or bolts to our doors and windows. The case is now altered, and our methods of defense ought to improve with our increase of property. A common pirate, twelve months ago, might have come up the Delaware and laid the city of Philadelphia under contribution for what sum he pleased; and the same might have happened to other places. Nay, any daring fellow in a brig of 14 or 16 guns might have robbed the whole continent, and carried off half a million of money. These are circumstances which demand our attention, and point out the necessity of naval protection.

Some perhaps will say that after we have made it up with Britain, she will protect us. Can they be so unwise as to mean that she will keep a navy in our harbors for that purpose? Common sense will tell us that the power which hath endeavored to subdue us is, of all others, the most improper to defend us. Conquest may be effected under the pretense of

friendship; and ourselves, after a long and brave resistance, be at last cheated into slavery. And if her ships are not to be admitted into our harbors, I would ask, how is she to protect us? A navy three or four thousand miles off can be of little use, and on sudden emergencies, none at all. Wherefore if we must hereafter protect ourselves, why not do it for ourselves? Why do it for another?

The English list of ships of war is long and formidable, but not a tenth part of them are at any one time fit for service, numbers of them are not in being; yet their names are pompously continued in the list, if only a plank be left of the ship: and not a fifth part of such as are fit for service can be spared on any one station at one time. The East and West Indies, Mediterranean, Africa, and other parts over which Britain extends her claim, make large demands upon her navy. From a mixture of prejudice and inattention, we have contracted a false notion respecting the navy of England, and have talked as if we should have the whole of it to encounter at once, and for that reason supposed that we must have one as large; which not being instantly practicable, has been made use of by a set of disguised tories to discourage our beginning thereon. Nothing can be further from truth than this; for if America had only a twentieth part of the naval force of Britain, she would be by far an overmatch for her; because, as we neither have nor claim any foreign dominion, our whole force would be employed on our own coast, where we should in the long run have two to one the advantage of those who had three or four thousand miles to sail over before they could attack us, and the same distance to return in order to refit and recruit. And although Britain, by her fleet, hath a check over our trade to Europe, we have as large a one over her trade to the West Indies which, by laying in the neighborhood of the continent, lies entirely at its mercy.

Some method might be fallen on to keep up a naval force in time of peace, if we should not judge it necessary to support a constant navy. If premiums were to be given to merchants to build and employ in their service ships mounted with twenty,

thirty, forty, or fifty guns (the premiums to be in proportion to the loss of bulk to the merchant), fifty or sixty of those ships, with a few guardships on constant duty, would keep up a sufficient navy, and that without burdening ourselves with the evil so loudly complained of in England of suffering their fleet in time of peace to lie rotting in the docks. To unite the sinews of commerce and defense is sound policy; for when our strength and our riches play into each other's hands, we need fear no external enemy.

In almost every article of defense we abound. Hemp flourishes even to rankness, so that we need not want cordage. Our iron is superior to that of other countries. Our small arms equal to any in the world. Cannon we can cast at pleasure. Saltpeter and gunpowder we are every day producing. Our knowledge is hourly improving. Resolution is our inherent character, and courage has never yet forsaken us. Wherefore, what is it that we want? Why is it that we hesitate? From Britain we can expect nothing but ruin. If she is once admitted to the government of America again, this continent will not be worth living in. Jealousies will be always arising; insurrections will be constantly happening; and who will go forth to quell them? Who will venture his life to reduce his own countrymen to a foreign obedience? The difference between Pennsylvania and Connecticut, respecting some unlocated lands, shows the insignificance of a British government, and fully proves that nothing but continental authority can regulate continental matters.

Another reason why the present time is preferable to all others is that the fewer our numbers are, the more land there is yet unoccupied which, instead of being lavished by the king on his worthless dependents, may be hereafter supplied not only to the discharge of the present debt but to the constant support of government. No nation under heaven hath such an advantage as this.

The infant state of the colonies, as it is called, so far from being against, is an argument in favor of independence. We are sufficiently numerous, and were we more so we might be less

united. It is a matter worthy of observation that the more a country is peopled the smaller their armies are. In military numbers, the ancients far exceeded the moderns; and the reason is evident, for trade being the consequence of population men became too much absorbed thereby to attend to anything else. Commerce diminishes the spirit both of patriotism and military defense. And history sufficiently informs us that the bravest achievements were always accomplished in the nonage of a nation. With the increase of commerce England hath lost its spirit. The city of London, notwithstanding its numbers, submits to continued insults with the patience of a coward. The more men have to lose, the less willing are they to venture. The rich are in general slaves to fear, and submit to courtly power with the trembling duplicity of a spaniel.

Youth is the seedtime of good habits, as well in nations as in individuals. It might be difficult, if not impossible, to form the continent into one government half a century hence. The vast variety of interests, occasioned by an increase of trade and population, would create confusion. Colony would be against colony. Each, being able, would scorn each other's assistance; and while the proud and foolish gloried in their little distinctions, the wise would lament that the union had not been formed before. Wherefore the present time is the true time for establishing it. The intimacy which is contracted in infancy and the friendship which is formed in misfortune are of all others the most lasting and unalterable. Our present union is marked with both these characters; we are young, and we have been distressed; but our concord hath withstood our troubles, and fixes a memorable era for posterity to glory in.

The present time, likewise, is that peculiar time which never happens to a nation but once, viz. the time of forming itself into a government. Most nations have let slip the opportunity, and by that means have been compelled to receive laws from their conquerors instead of making laws for themselves. First they had a king, and then a form of government; whereas the articles or charter of government should be formed first, and men delegated to execute them afterwards: but from the errors of

other nations let us learn wisdom and lay hold of the present opportunity—*to begin government at the right end.*

When William the Conqueror subdued England, he gave them law at the point of the sword; and until we consent that the seat of government in America be legally and authoritatively occupied, we shall be in danger of having it filled by some fortunate ruffian who may treat us in the same manner, and then where will be our freedom? where our property?

As to religion, I hold it to be the indispensable duty of government to protect all conscientious professors thereof, and I know of no other business which government has to do therewith. Let a man throw aside that narrowness of soul, that selfishness of principle, which the niggards of all professions are so unwilling to part with, and he will be at once delivered of his fears on that head. Suspicion is the companion of mean souls and the bane of all good society. For myself, I fully and conscientiously believe that it is the will of the Almighty that there should be a diversity of religious opinions among us. It affords a larger field for our Christian kindness. Were we all of one way of thinking, our religious dispositions would want matter for probation; and on this liberal principle I look on the various denominations among us to be like children of the same family, differing only in what is called their Christian names.

In pages [31-32] I threw out a few thoughts on the propriety of a continental charter (for I only presume to offer hints, not plans) and in this place I take the liberty of re-mentioning the subject by observing that a charter is to be understood as a bond of solemn obligation, which the whole enters into, to support the right of every separate part, whether of religion, professional freedom, or property. A right reckoning makes long friends.

I have heretofore, likewise, mentioned the necessity of a large and equal representation; and there is no political matter which more deserves our attention. A small number of electors, or a small number of representatives, are equally dangerous. But if the number of the representatives be not only small, but unequal, the danger is increased. As an instance of this I mention

the following; when the petition of the associates was before the house of assembly of Pennsylvania, twenty-eight members only were present; all the Bucks county members, being eight, voted against it, and had seven of the Chester members done the same, this whole province had been governed by two counties only; and this danger it is always exposed to. The unwarrantable stretch, likewise, which the house made in their last sitting to gain an undue authority over the delegates of that province, ought to warn the people at large, how they trust power out of their hands. A set of instructions for their delegates were put together, which in point of sense and business would have dishonored a schoolboy, and after being approved by a few, a very few, without doors, were carried into the house, and there passed in behalf of the whole colony; whereas, did the whole colony know with what ill-will that house had entered on some necessary public measures, they would not hesitate a moment to think them unworthy of such a trust.

Immediate necessity makes many things convenient, which if continued would grow into oppressions. Expedience and right are different things. When the calamities of America required a consultation, there was no method so ready, or at that time so proper, as to appoint persons from the several houses of assembly for that purpose; and the wisdom with which they have proceeded hath preserved this continent from ruin. But as it is more than probable that we shall never be without a CONGRESS, every well-wisher to good order must own that the mode for choosing members of that body deserves consideration. And I put it as a question to those who make a study of mankind, whether representation and election is not too great a power for one and the same body of men to possess? When we are planning for posterity, we ought to remember that virtue is not hereditary.

It is from our enemies that we often gain excellent maxims, and are frequently surprised into reason by their mistakes. Mr. Cornwall (one of the lords of the treasury) treated the petition of the New York assembly with contempt, because *that* house, he said, consisted but of twenty-six members, which

trifling number, he argued, could not with decency be put for the whole. We thank him for his involuntary honesty.<sup>1</sup>

TO CONCLUDE. However strange it may appear to some, or however unwilling they may be to think so, matters not, but many strong and striking reasons may be given to show that nothing can settle our affairs so expeditiously as an open and determined DECLARATION FOR INDEPENDENCE. Some of which are:

*First.* It is the custom of nations, when any two are at war, for some other powers not engaged in the quarrel to step in as mediators, and bring about the preliminaries of a peace; but while America calls herself the Subject of Great Britain, no power, however well disposed she may be, can offer her mediation. Wherefore, in our present state we may quarrel on forever.

*Secondly.* It is unreasonable to suppose that France or Spain will give us any kind of assistance if we mean only to make use of that assistance for the purpose of repairing the breach and strengthening the connection between Britain and America; because those powers would be sufferers by the consequences.

*Thirdly.* While we profess ourselves the subjects of Britain, we must, in the eyes of foreign nations, be considered as rebels. The precedent is somewhat dangerous to *their peace*, for men to be in arms under the name of subjects: we, on the spot, can solve the paradox; but to unite resistance and subjection requires an idea much too refined for common understanding.

*Fourthly.* Were a manifesto to be published and despatched to foreign courts, setting forth the miseries we have endured and the peaceful methods which we have ineffectually used for redress; declaring at the same time that, not being able any longer to live happily or safely under the cruel disposition of the British court, we have been driven to the necessity of breaking off all connections with her; at the same time assuring all such courts of our peaceable disposition towards them, and of

<sup>1</sup> Those who would fully understand of what great consequence a large and equal representation is to a State should read Burgh's Political Disquisitions. [Paine's note.]

our desire of entering into trade with them: such a memorial would produce more good effects to this continent, than if a ship were freighted with petitions to Britain.

Under our present denomination of British subjects, we can neither be received nor heard abroad: the custom of all courts is against us, and will be so until by an independence we take rank with other nations.

These proceedings may at first seem strange and difficult, but like all other steps which we have already passed over, will in a little time become familiar and agreeable; and until an Independence is declared, the continent will feel itself like a man who continues putting off some unpleasant business from day to day, yet knows it must be done, hates to set about it, wishes it over, and is continually haunted with the thoughts of its necessity.

## THE CRISIS

### NUMBER I

These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country; but he that stands it *now*, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly: it is dearness only that gives everything its value. Heaven knows how to put a proper price upon its goods; and it would be strange indeed if so celestial an article as FREEDOM should not be highly rated. Britain, with an army to enforce her tyranny, has declared that she has a right (*not only to TAX*) but "to BIND *us in ALL CASES WHATSOEVER*"; and if being *bound in that manner* is not slavery, then is there not such a thing as slavery upon earth. Even the expression is impious; for so unlimited a power can belong only to God.

Whether the independence of the continent was declared too soon, or delayed too long, I will not now enter into as an argument; my own simple opinion is, that had it been eight months earlier it would have been much better. We did not make a proper use of last winter; neither could we, while we were in a dependent state. However, the fault, if it were one, was all our own; we have none to blame but ourselves. But no great deal is lost yet. All that Howe has been doing for this month past is rather a ravage than a conquest, which the spirit of the Jerseys a year ago would have quickly repulsed, and which time and a little resolution will soon recover.

I have as little superstition in me as any man living; but my secret opinion has ever been, and still is, that God Almighty will not give up a people to military destruction, or leave them

unsupportedly to perish, who have so earnestly and so repeatedly sought to avoid the calamities of war, by every decent method which wisdom could invent. Neither have I so much of the infidel in me as to suppose that he has relinquished the government of the world, and given us up to the care of devils; and as I do not, I cannot see on what grounds the king of Britain can look up to heaven for help against us: a common murderer, a highwayman, or a housebreaker, has as good a pretense as he.

It is surprising to see how rapidly a panic will sometimes run through a country. All nations and ages have been subject to them: Britain has trembled like an ague at the report of a French fleet of flat-bottomed boats; and in the fourteenth century the whole English army, after ravaging the kingdom of France, was driven back like men petrified with fear; and this brave exploit was performed by a few broken forces collected and headed by a woman, Joan of Arc. Would that heaven might inspire some Jersey maid to spirit up her countrymen, and save her fair fellow sufferers from ravage and ravishment! Yet panics, in some cases, have their uses; they produce as much good as hurt. Their duration is always short; the mind soon grows through them, and acquires a firmer habit than before. But their peculiar advantage is, that they are the touchstones of sincerity and hypocrisy, and bring things and men to light, which might otherwise have lain forever undiscovered. In fact, they have the same effect on secret traitors which an imaginary apparition would have upon a private murderer. They sift out the hidden thoughts of man, and hold them up in public to the world. Many a disguised tory has lately shown his head, that shall penitentially solemnize with curses the day on which Howe arrived upon the Delaware.

As I was with the troops at Fort Lee, and marched with them to the edge of Pennsylvania, I am well acquainted with many circumstances which those who live at a distance know but little or nothing of. Our situation there was exceedingly cramped, the place being a narrow neck of land between the North River and the Hackensack. Our force was inconsiderable, being not

one-fourth so great as Howe could bring against us. We had no army at hand to have relieved the garrison, had we shut ourselves up and stood on our defense. Our ammunition, light artillery, and the best part of our stores, had been removed, on the apprehension that Howe would endeavor to penetrate the Jerseys, in which case Fort Lee could be of no use to us; for it must occur to every thinking man, whether in the army or not, that these kind of field forts are only for temporary purposes, and last in use no longer than the enemy directs his force against the particular object which such forts are raised to defend. Such was our situation and condition at Fort Lee on the morning of the 20th of November, when an officer arrived with information that the enemy with 200 boats had landed about seven miles above. Major General Green, who commanded the garrison, immediately ordered them under arms, and sent express to General Washington at the town of Hackensack, distant by the way of the ferry, six miles. Our first object was to secure the bridge over the Hackensack, which laid up the river between the enemy and us, about six miles from us, three from them. General Washington arrived in about three-quarters of an hour, and marched at the head of the troops towards the bridge, which place I expected we should have a brush for; however, they did not choose to dispute it with us, and the greatest part of our troops went over the bridge, the rest over the ferry, except some which passed at a mill on a small creek between the bridge and the ferry, and made their way through some marshy grounds up to the town of Hackensack, and there passed the river. We brought off as much baggage as the wagons could contain, the rest was lost. The simple object was to bring off the garrison and march them on till they could be strengthened by the Jersey or Pennsylvania militia, so as to be enabled to make a stand. We staid four days at Newark, collected our outposts with some of the Jersey militia, and marched out twice to meet the enemy on being informed that they were advancing, though our numbers were greatly inferior to theirs. Howe, in my little opinion, committed a great error in generalship in not throwing a body of forces off from Staten Island through Am-

boy, by which means he might have seized all our stores at Brunswick and intercepted our march into Pennsylvania; but if we believe the power of hell to be limited, we must likewise believe that their agents are under some providential control.

I shall not now attempt to give all the particulars of our retreat to the Delaware; suffice it for the present to say that both officers and men, though greatly harassed and fatigued, frequently without rest, covering, or provision—the inevitable consequences of a long retreat—bore it with a manly and martial spirit. All their wishes centered in one; which was, that the country would turn out and help them to drive the enemy back. Voltaire has remarked that King William never appeared to full advantage but in difficulties and in action; the same remark may be made on General Washington, for the character fits him. There is a natural firmness in some minds which cannot be unlocked by trifles, but which, when unlocked, discovers a cabinet of fortitude; and I reckon it among those kinds of public blessings, which we do not immediately see, that God hath blessed him with uninterrupted health, and given him a mind that can even flourish upon care.

I shall conclude this paper with some miscellaneous remarks on the state of our affairs; and shall begin with asking the following question, Why is it that the enemy have left the New England provinces, and made these middle ones the seat of war? The answer is easy: New England is not infested with tories, and we are. I have been tender in raising the cry against these men, and used numberless arguments to show them their danger, but it will not do to sacrifice a world either to their folly or their baseness. The period is now arrived in which either they or we must change our sentiments, or one or both must fall. And what is a tory? Good God! what is he? I should not be afraid to go with a hundred Whigs against a thousand tories, were they to attempt to get into arms. Every tory is a coward; for servile, slavish, self-interested fear is the foundation of toryism; and a man under such influence, though he may be cruel, never can be brave.

But, before the line of irrecoverable separation be drawn be-

tween us, let us reason the matter together: Your conduct is an invitation to the enemy, yet not one in a thousand of you has heart enough to join him. Howe is as much deceived by you as the American cause is injured by you. He expects you will all take up arms and flock to his standard with muskets on your shoulders. Your opinions are of no use to him unless you support him personally, for it is soldiers, and not tories, that he wants.

I once felt all that kind of anger, which a man ought to feel, against the mean principles that are held by the tories: A noted one, who kept a tavern at Amboy, was standing at his door, with as pretty a child in his hand, about eight or nine years old, as I ever saw, and after speaking his mind as freely as he thought was prudent, finished with this unfatherly expression, "*Well! give me peace in my day.*" Not a man lives on the continent but fully believes that a separation must some time or other finally take place, and a generous parent should have said, "*If there must be trouble, let it be in my day, that my child may have peace;*" and this single reflection, well applied, is sufficient to awaken every man to duty. Not a place upon earth might be so happy as America. Her situation is remote from all the wrangling world, and she has nothing to do but to trade with them. A man can distinguish himself between temper and principle; and I am as confident as I am that God governs the world, that America will never be happy till she gets clear of foreign dominion. Wars, without ceasing, will break out till that period arrives, and the continent must in the end be conqueror; for though the flame of liberty may sometimes cease to shine, the coal can never expire.

America did not, nor does not want force; but she wanted a proper application of that force. Wisdom is not the purchase of a day, and it is no wonder that we should err at the first setting off. From an excess of tenderness, we were unwilling to raise an army, and trusted our cause to the temporary defense of a well-meaning militia. A summer's experience has now taught us better; yet with those troops, while they were collected, we were able to set bounds to the progress of the enemy,

and thank God! they are again assembling. I always considered militia as the best troops in the world for a sudden exertion, but they will not do for a long campaign. Howe, it is probable, will make an attempt on this city; should he fail on this side the Delaware, he is ruined. If he succeeds, our cause is not ruined. He stakes all on his side against a part on ours; admitting he succeeds, the consequences will be that armies from both ends of the continent will march to assist their suffering friends in the middle states; for he cannot go everywhere—it is impossible. I consider Howe as the greatest enemy the tories have; he is bringing a war into their country, which, had it not been for him and partly for themselves, they had been clear of. Should he now be expelled, I wish with all the devotion of a Christian, that the names of Whig and Tory may never more be mentioned; but should the tories give him encouragement to come, or assistance if he come, I as sincerely wish that our next year's arms may expel them from the continent, and the Congress appropriate their possessions to the relief of those who have suffered in well-doing. A single successful battle next year will settle the whole. America could carry on a two years' war by the confiscation of the property of disaffected persons, and be made happy by their expulsion. Say not that this is revenge; call it rather the soft resentment of a suffering people, who, having no object in view but the *good* of *all*, have staked their *own all* upon a seemingly doubtful event. Yet it is folly to argue against determined hardness; eloquence may strike the ear, and the language of sorrow draw forth the tear of compassion, but nothing can reach the heart that is steeled with prejudice.

Quitting this class of men, I turn with the warm ardor of a friend to those who have nobly stood, and are yet determined to stand the matter out: I call not upon a few, but upon all: not on *this* State or *that* State, but on *every* State: up and help us; lay your shoulders to the wheel; better have too much force than too little, when so great an object is at stake. Let it be told to the future world, that in the depth of winter, when nothing but hope and virtue could survive, that the city and the country, alarmed at one common danger, came forth to meet and to re-

pulse it. Say not that thousands are gone—turn out your tens of thousands; throw not the burden of the day upon Providence, but “*show your faith by your works*,” that God may bless you. It matters not where you live, or what rank of life you hold, the evil or the blessing will reach you all. The far and the near, the home counties and the back, the rich and the poor, will suffer or rejoice alike. The heart that feels not now is dead; the blood of his children will curse his cowardice who shrinks back at a time when a little might have saved the whole and made *them* happy. I love the man that can smile in trouble, that can gather strength from distress and grow brave by reflection. It is the business of little minds to shrink; but he whose heart is firm, and whose conscience approves his conduct, will pursue his principles unto death. My own line of reasoning is to myself as straight and clear as a ray of light. Not all the treasures of the world, so far as I believe, could have induced me to support an offensive war, for I think it murder; but if a thief breaks into my house, burns and destroys my property, and kills or threatens to kill me or those that are in it, and to “*bind me in all cases whatsoever*” to his absolute will, am I to suffer it? What signifies it to me whether he who does it is a king or a common man; my countryman or not my countryman; whether it be done by an individual villain, or an army of them? If we reason to the root of things we shall find no difference; neither can any just cause be assigned why we should punish in the one case and pardon in the other. Let them call me rebel and welcome—I feel no concern from it; but I should suffer the misery of devils, were I to make a whore of my soul by swearing allegiance to one whose character is that of a sottish, stupid, stubborn, worthless, brutish man. I conceive likewise a horrid idea in receiving mercy from a being, who at the last day shall be shrieking to the rocks and mountains to cover him, and fleeing with terror from the orphan, the widow, and the slain of America.

There are cases which cannot be overdone by language, and this is one. There are persons, too, who see not the full extent of the evil which threatens them; they solace themselves with hopes that the enemy, if he succeed, will be merciful. It is the

madness of folly, to expect mercy from those who have refused to do justice; and even mercy, where conquest is the object, is only a trick of war. The cunning of the fox is as murderous as the violence of the wolf, and we ought to guard equally against both. Howe's first object is, partly by threats and partly by promises, to terrify or seduce the people to deliver up their arms and receive mercy. The ministry recommended the same plan to Gage, and this is what the tories call making their peace, "*a peace which passeth all understanding*," indeed! A peace which would be the immediate forerunner of a worse ruin than any we have yet thought of. Ye men of Pennsylvania, do reason upon these things! Were the back counties to give up their arms, they would fall an easy prey to the Indians, who are all armed: this perhaps is what some tories would not be sorry for. Were the home counties to deliver up their arms, they would be exposed to the resentment of the back counties, who would then have it in their power to chastise their defection at pleasure. And were any one State to give up its arms, *that* State must be garrisoned by all Howe's army of Britons and Hessians to preserve it from the anger of the rest. Mutual fear is the principal link in the chain of mutual love; and woe be to that State that breaks the compact. Howe is mercifully inviting you to barbarous destruction, and men must be either rogues or fools that will not see it. I dwell not upon the vapors of imagination; I bring reason to your ears, and, in language as plain as A B C, hold up truth to your eyes.

I thank God that I fear not. I see no real cause for fear. I know our situation well, and can see the way out of it. While our army was collected, Howe dared not risk a battle; and it is no credit to him that he decamped from the White Plains, and waited a mean opportunity to ravage the defenseless Jerseys; but it is great credit to us, that with a handful of men, we sustained an orderly retreat for near a hundred miles, brought off our ammunition, all our fieldpieces, the greatest part of our stores, and had four rivers to pass. None can say that our retreat was precipitate; for we were near three weeks in performing it, that the country might have time to come in. Twice we

marched back to meet the enemy, and remained out till dark. The sign of fear was not seen in our camp, and had not some of the cowardly and disaffected inhabitants spread false alarms through the country, the Jerseys had never been ravaged. Once more we are again collected and collecting, our new army at both ends of the continent is recruiting fast, and we shall be able to open the next campaign with sixty thousand men, well-armed and clothed. This is our situation, and who will may know it. By perseverance and fortitude we have the prospect of a glorious issue; by cowardice and submission, the sad choice of a variety of evils: a ravaged country—a depopulated city—habitations without safety, and slavery without hope—our homes turned into barracks and bawdy-houses for Hessians—and a future race to provide for, whose fathers we shall doubt of. Look on this picture and weep over it! and if there yet remains one thoughtless wretch who believes it not, let him suffer it unlamented.

COMMON SENSE

December 23, 1776

# THE RIGHTS OF MAN

BEING AN ANSWER TO MR. BURKE'S ATTACK  
ON THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

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## PART I

[DEDICATION]

TO GEORGE WASHINGTON

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

SIR,

I PRESENT you a small treatise in defense of those principles of freedom which your exemplary virtue hath so eminently contributed to establish. That the rights of man may become as universal as your benevolence can wish, and that you may enjoy the happiness of seeing the New World regenerate the Old, is the prayer of

Sir

Your much obliged, and

Obedient humble servant,

THOMAS PAINE

## PREFACES

### 1. *Preface to the French Edition*

The astonishment which the French Revolution has caused throughout Europe should be considered from two different points of view: first as it affects foreign people, secondly as it affects their governments.

The cause of the French people is that of all Europe, or rather of the whole world; but the governments of all those countries are by no means favorable to it. It is important that we should never lose sight of this distinction. We must not confuse the peoples with their governments; especially not the English people with its government.

The government of England is no friend to the revolution of France. Of this we have sufficient proofs in the thanks given by that weak and witless person, the Elector of Hanover, sometimes called the King of England, to Mr. Burke for the insults heaped on it in his book, and in the malevolent comments of the English Minister, Mr. Pitt, in his speeches in Parliament.

In spite of the professions of sincerest friendship found in the official correspondence of the English government with that of France, its conduct gives the lie to all its declarations and shows us clearly that it is not a court to be trusted, but an insane court, plunging in all the quarrels and intrigues of Europe in quest of a war to satisfy its folly and countenance its extravagance.

The English nation, on the contrary, is very favorably disposed towards the French Revolution and to the progress of liberty in the whole world; and this feeling will become more general in England as the intrigues and artifices of its government are better known, and the principles of the revolution better understood. The French should know that most English newspapers are directly in the pay of government or, if indirectly connected with it, always under its orders; and that these papers constantly distort and attack the revolution in France in order to deceive the nation. But, as it is impossible long to prevent the prevalence of truth, the daily falsehoods of those papers no longer have the desired effect.

To be convinced that the voice of truth has been stifled in England, the world needs only to be told that the government regards and prosecutes as a libel that which it should protect.<sup>1</sup> This outrage on morality is called *law*, and judges are found wicked enough to inflict penalties on truth.

<sup>1</sup>The main and uniform maxim of the judges is, the greater the truth the greater the libel. [Paine's note.]

The English government presents just now a curious phenomenon. Seeing that the French and English nations are getting rid of the prejudices and false notions formerly entertained against each other, and which have cost them so much money, that government seems to be placarding its need of a foe; for unless it finds one somewhere, no pretext exists for the enormous revenue and taxation now deemed necessary.

Therefore it seeks in Russia the enemy it has lost in France, and appears to say to the universe, or to say to itself: "If nobody will be so kind as to become my foe, I shall need no more fleets or armies, and shall be forced to reduce my taxes. The American war enabled me to double the taxes; the Dutch business to add more; the Nootka humbug gave me a pretext for raising three millions sterling more; but unless I can make an enemy of Russia the harvest from wars will end. I was the first to incite Turk against Russian, and now I hope to reap a fresh crop of taxes."

If the miseries of war and the flood of evils it spreads over a country did not check all inclination to mirth and turn laughter into grief, the frantic conduct of the government of England would only excite ridicule. But it is impossible to banish from one's mind the images of suffering which the contemplation of such vicious policy presents. To reason with governments, as they have existed for ages, is to argue with brutes. It is only from the nations themselves that reforms can be expected. There ought not now to exist any doubt that the peoples of France, England, and America, enlightened and enlightening each other, shall henceforth be able, not merely to give the world an example of good government, but by their united influence enforce its practice.

## 2. *Preface to the English Edition*

From the part Mr. Burke took in the American Revolution it was natural that I should consider him a friend to mankind; and as our acquaintance commenced on that ground, it would have been more agreeable to me to have had cause to continue in that opinion than to change it.

At the time Mr. Burke made his violent speech last winter in the English Parliament against the French Revolution and the National Assembly, I was in Paris, and had written to him but a short time before to inform him how prosperously matters were going on. Soon after this I saw his advertisement of the pamphlet he intended to publish: As the attack was to be made in a language but little studied and less understood in France, and as everything suffers by translation, I promised some of the friends of the Revolution in that country that whenever Mr. Burke's pamphlet came forth, I would answer it. This appeared to me the more necessary to be done when I saw the flagrant misrepresentations which Mr. Burke's pamphlet contains; and that while it is an outrageous abuse on the French Revolution and the principles of Liberty, it is an imposition on the rest of the world.

I am the more astonished and disappointed at this conduct in Mr. Burke, as (from the circumstances I am going to mention) I had formed other expectations.

I had seen enough of the miseries of war to wish it might never more have existence in the world, and that some other mode might be found out to settle the differences that should occasionally arise in the neighborhood of nations. This certainly might be done if courts were disposed to set honestly about it, or if countries were enlightened enough not to be made the dupes of courts. The people of America had been bred up in the same prejudices against France which at that time characterized the people of England; but experience and an acquaintance with the French nation have most effectually shown to the Americans the falsehood of those prejudices; and I do not believe that a more cordial and confidential intercourse exists between any two countries than between America and France.

When I came to France in the spring of 1787, the Archbishop of Toulouse was then Minister, and at that time highly esteemed. I became much acquainted with the private secretary of that minister, a man of an enlarged benevolent heart; and found that his sentiments and my own perfectly agreed with respect to the madness of war and the wretched impolicy of two nations, like

England and France, continually worrying each other to no other end than that of a mutual increase of burdens and taxes. That I might be assured I had not misunderstood him, nor he me, I put the substance of our opinions into writing and sent it to him; subjoining a request, that if I should see among the people of England any disposition to cultivate a better understanding between the two nations than had hitherto prevailed, how far I might be authorized to say that the same disposition prevailed on the part of France? He answered me by letter in the most unreserved manner, and that not for himself only, but for the minister with whose knowledge the letter was declared to be written.

I put this letter into the hands of Mr. Burke almost three years ago, and left it with him, where it still remains; hoping, and at the same time naturally expecting, from the opinion I had conceived of him, that he would find some opportunity of making good use of it for the purpose of removing those errors and prejudices which two neighboring nations, from the want of knowing each other, had entertained to the injury of both.

When the French Revolution broke out it certainly afforded to Mr. Burke an opportunity of doing some good had he been disposed to it; instead of which, no sooner did he see the old prejudices wearing away, than he immediately began sowing the seeds of a new inveteracy, as if he were afraid that England and France would cease to be enemies. That there are men in all countries who get their living by war, and by keeping up the quarrels of nations, is as shocking as it is true; but when those who are concerned in the government of a country make it their study to sow discord and cultivate prejudices between nations, it becomes more unpardonable.

With respect to a paragraph in this work alluding to Mr. Burke's having a pension, the report has been some time in circulation, at least two months; and as a person is often the last to hear what concerns him the most to know, I have mentioned it, that Mr. Burke may have an opportunity of contradicting the rumor, if he thinks proper,

[ON BURKE'S "REFLECTIONS ON THE  
FRENCH REVOLUTION"]

Among the incivilities by which nations or individuals provoke and irritate each other, Mr. Burke's pamphlet on the French revolution is an extraordinary instance. Neither the people of France nor the national assembly were troubling themselves about the affairs of England or the English parliament; and why Mr. Burke should commence an unprovoked attack upon them, both in parliament and in public, is a conduct that cannot be pardoned on the score of manners, nor justified on that of policy.

There is scarcely an epithet of abuse to be found in the English language with which Mr. Burke has not loaded the French nation and the national assembly. Everything which rancor, prejudice, ignorance, or knowledge could suggest, are poured forth in the copious fury of near four hundred pages. In the strain and on the plan Mr. Burke was writing, he might have wrote on to as many thousand. When the tongue or the pen is let loose in a frenzy of passion, it is the man and not the subject that becomes exhausted.

Hitherto Mr. Burke has been mistaken and disappointed in the opinions he had formed on the affairs of France; but such is the ingenuity of his hope, or the malignancy of his despair, that it furnishes him with new pretenses to go on. There was a time when it was impossible to make Mr. Burke believe there would be any revolution in France. His opinion then was that the French had neither spirit to undertake it nor fortitude to support it; and now that there is one, he seeks an escape by condemning it.

Not sufficiently content with abusing the national assembly, a great part of his work is taken up with abusing Dr. Price (one of the best-hearted men that exists) and the two societies in England, known by the name of the Revolution and the Constitutional societies.

Dr. Price had preached a sermon on the 4th of November, 1789, being the anniversary of what is called in England the

revolution, which took place in 1688. Mr. Burke, speaking of this sermon, says, "the political divine proceeds dogmatically to assert that, by the principles of the revolution, the people of England have acquired three fundamental rights:

- 1st, To choose our own governors.
- 2d, To cashier them for misconduct.
- 3d, To frame a government for ourselves."

Dr. Price does not say that the right to do these things exists in this or in that person, or in this or in that description of persons, but that it exists in the *whole*—that it is a right resident in the nation. Mr. Burke, on the contrary, denies that such a right exists in the nation, either in whole or in part, or that it exists anywhere; and what is still more strange and marvellous, he says that "the people of England utterly disclaim such right, and that they will resist the practical assertion of it with their lives and fortunes." That men will take up arms, and spend their lives and fortunes *not* to maintain their rights, but to maintain that they have *not* rights, is an entire new species of discovery, and suited to the paradoxical genius of Mr. Burke.

The method which Mr. Burke takes to prove that the people of England have no such rights, and that such rights do not exist in the nation, either in whole or in part, or anywhere at all, is of the same marvellous and monstrous kind with what he has already said; for his arguments are that the persons, or the generation of persons, in whom they did exist are dead, and with them the right is dead also. To prove this, he quotes a declaration made by parliament about a hundred years ago to William and Mary in these words: "The lords spiritual and temporal, and commons, do, in the name of the people aforesaid (meaning the people of England then living) most humbly and faithfully *submit* themselves, their *heirs* and *posterity*, FOREVER." He also quotes a clause of another act of parliament made in the same reign, the terms of which, he says, "bind us (meaning the people of that day), our *heirs* and our *posterity*, to *them*, their *heirs* and *posterity*, to the end of time."

Mr. Burke considers his point sufficiently established by producing those clauses, which he enforces by saying that they ex-

clude the right of the nation *forever*: and not yet content with making such declarations, repeated over and over again, he further says "that if the people of England possessed such a right before the revolution" (which he acknowledges to have been the case, not only in England, but throughout Europe, at an early period), "yet that the *English nation* did, at the time of the revolution, most solemnly renounce and abdicate it, for themselves, and *for all their posterity forever*."

As Mr. Burke occasionally applies the poison drawn from his horrid principles (if it is not a profanation to call them by the name of principles) not only to the English nation, but to the French revolution and the national assembly, and charges that august, illuminated and illuminating body of men with the epithet of *usurpers*, I shall, *sans cérémonie*, place another system of principles in opposition to his.

The English parliament of 1688 did a certain thing which for themselves and their constituents they had a right to do, and which appeared right should be done; but in addition to this right, which they possessed by delegation, *they set up another right by assumption*, that of binding and controlling posterity to the end of time. The case, therefore, divides itself into two parts; the right which they possessed by delegation, and the right which they set up by assumption. The first is admitted; but with respect to the second, I reply:

There never did, nor never can exist a parliament, or any description of men, or any generation of men, in any country, possessed of the right or the power of binding or controlling posterity to the "end of time," or of commanding forever how the world shall be governed, or who shall govern it; and therefore all such clauses, acts, or declarations, by which the makers of them attempt to do what they have neither the right nor the power to do, nor the power to execute, are in themselves null and void. Every age and generation must be as free to act for itself, *in all cases*, as the ages and generations which preceded it. The vanity and presumption of governing beyond the grave is the most ridiculous and insolent of all tyrannies. Man has no property in man; neither has any generation a property in the

generations which are to follow. The parliament or the people of 1688, or of any other period, had no more right to dispose of the people of the present day, or to bind or to control them *in any shape whatever*, than the parliament or the people of the present day have to dispose of, bind, or control those who are to live a hundred or a thousand years hence. Every generation is and must be competent to all the purposes which its occasions require. It is the living and not the dead that are to be accommodated. When man ceases to be, his power and his wants cease with him; and having no longer any participation in the concerns of this world, he has no longer any authority in directing who shall be its governors, or how its government shall be organized, or how administered.

I am not contending for, nor against, any form of government, nor for nor against any party, here or elsewhere. That which a whole nation chooses to do, it has a right to do. Mr. Burke denies it. Where then does the right exist? I am contending for the right of the *living*, and against their being willed away, and controlled and contracted for, by the manuscript-assumed authority of the dead; and Mr. Burke is contending for the authority of the dead over the rights and freedom of the living. There was a time when kings disposed of their crowns by will upon their deathbeds, and consigned the people, like beasts of the field, to whatever successor they appointed. This is now so exploded as scarcely to be remembered, and so monstrous as hardly to be believed; but the parliamentary clauses upon which Mr. Burke builds his political church are of the same nature.

The laws of every country must be analogous to some common principle. In England, no parent or master, nor all the authority of parliament, omnipotent as it has called itself, can bind or control the personal freedom even of an individual beyond the age of twenty-one years: on what ground of right then could the parliament of 1688, or any other parliament, bind all posterity forever?

Those who have quitted the world, and those who are not arrived yet in it, are as remote from each other as the utmost

stretch of mortal imagination can conceive: what possible obligation then can exist between them, what rule or principle can be laid down, that two nonentities, the one out of existence, and the other not in, and who never can meet in this world, that the one should control the other to the end of time?

In England it is said that money cannot be taken out of the pockets of the people without their consent: but who authorized, and who could authorize, the parliament of 1688 to control and take away the freedom of posterity, and limit and confine their rights of acting in certain cases forever, who were not in existence to give or withhold their consent?

A greater absurdity cannot present itself to the understanding of man than what Mr. Burke offers to his readers. He tells them, and he tells the world to come, that a certain body of men, who existed a hundred years ago, made a law, and that there does not now exist in the nation, nor never will, nor never can, a power to alter it. Under how many subtleties, or absurdities, has the divine right to govern been imposed on the credulity of mankind! Mr. Burke has discovered a new one, and he has shortened his journey to Rome by appealing to the power of this infallible parliament of former days; and he produces what it has done as of divine authority; for that power must be certainly more than human, which no human power to the end of time can alter.

But Mr. Burke has done some service, not to his cause, but to his country, by bringing those clauses into public view. They serve to demonstrate how necessary it is at all times to watch against the attempted encroachment of power, and to prevent its running to excess. It is somewhat extraordinary that the offense for which James II was expelled, that of setting up power by *assumption*, should be re-acted under another shape and form by the parliament that expelled him. It shows that the rights of man were but imperfectly understood at the revolution; for certain it is that the right which that parliament set up by *assumption* (for by delegation it had not, and could not have it, because none could give it) over the persons and freedom of posterity forever, was of the same tyrannical, unfounded kind which

James attempted to set up over the parliament and the nation, and for which he was expelled. The only difference is (for in principle they differ not) that the one was a usurper over the living, and the other over the unborn; and as the one has no better authority to stand upon than the other, both of them must be equally null and void, and of no effect.

From what or whence does Mr. Burke prove the right of any human power to bind posterity forever? He has produced his clauses; but he must produce also his proofs that such a right existed, and show how it existed. If it ever existed, it must now exist; for whatever appertains to the nature of man cannot be annihilated by man. It is the nature of man to die, and he will continue to die as long as he continues to be born. But Mr. Burke has set up a sort of political Adam in whom all posterity are bound forever; he must therefore prove that his Adam possessed such a power or such a right.

The weaker any cord is, the less it will bear to be stretched, and the worse is the policy to stretch it, unless it is intended to break it. Had a person contemplated the overthrow of Mr. Burke's positions, he would have proceeded as Mr. Burke has done. He would have magnified the authorities, on purpose to have called the *right* of them into question; and the instant the question of right was started, the authorities must have been given up.

It requires but a very small glance of thought to perceive that although laws made in one generation often continue in force through succeeding generations, yet they continue to derive their force from the consent of the living. A law not repealed continues in force, not because it *cannot* be repealed, but because it *is not* repealed; and the non-repealing passes for consent.

But Mr. Burke's clauses have not even this qualification in their favor. They become null by attempting to become immortal. The nature of them precludes consent. They destroy the right which they *might* have by grounding it on a right which they *cannot* have. Immortal power is not a human right, and therefore cannot be a right of parliament. The parliament

of 1688 might as well have passed an act to have authorized itself to live forever, as to make their authority live forever. All, therefore, that can be said of them is that they are a formality of words, of as much import as if those who used them had addressed a congratulation to themselves and, in the oriental style of antiquity, had said, O! parliament, live forever! .

The circumstances of the world are continually changing, and the opinions of men change also; and as government is for the living and not for the dead, it is the living only that has any right in it. That which may be thought right and found convenient in one age may be thought wrong and found inconvenient in another. In such cases, who is to decide, the living or the dead?

As almost one hundred pages of Mr. Burke's book are employed upon these clauses, it will consequently follow that if the clauses themselves, so far as they set up an *assumed, usurped* dominion over posterity forever, are unauthoritative, and in their nature null and void, that all his voluminous inferences and declamation drawn therefrom, or founded thereon, are null and void also: and on this ground I rest the matter.

We now come more particularly to the affairs of France. Mr. Burke's book has the appearance of being written as instruction to the French nation; but if I may permit myself the use of an extravagant metaphor, suited to the extravagance of the case, it is darkness attempting to illuminate light.

While I am writing this, there is accidentally before me some proposals for a declaration of rights by the Marquis de la Fayette (I ask his pardon for using his former address, and do it only for distinction's sake) to the national assembly on the 11th of July, 1789, three days before the taking of the Bastille; and I cannot but be struck how opposite the sources are from which that gentleman and Mr. Burke draw their principles. Instead of referring to musty records and mouldy parchments to prove that the rights of the living are lost, "renounced and abdicated forever" by those who are now no more, as Mr. Burke has done, M. de la Fayette applies to the living world, and emphatically says, "Call to mind the sentiments which nature has en-

graved in the heart of every citizen, and which take a new force when they are solemnly recognized by all:—for a nation to love liberty, it is sufficient that she knows it; and to be free, it is sufficient that she wills it.” How dry, barren, and obscure, is the source from which Mr. Burke labors; and how ineffectual, though embellished with flowers, is all his declamation and his argument, compared with these clear, concise, and soul-animating sentiments: few and short as they are, they lead on to a vast field of generous and manly thinking, and do not finish, like Mr. Burke’s periods, with music in the ear and nothing in the heart.

As I have introduced the mention of M. de la Fayette, I will take the liberty of adding an anecdote respecting his farewell address to the congress of America in 1783, and which occurred fresh to my mind when I saw Mr. Burke’s thundering attack on the French revolution. M. de la Fayette went to America at an early period of the war and continued a volunteer in her service to the end. His conduct through the whole of that enterprise is one of the most extraordinary that is to be found in the history of a young man, scarcely then twenty years of age. Situated in a country that was like the lap of sensual pleasure, and with the means of enjoying it, how few are there to be found who would exchange such a scene for the woods and wilderness of America, and pass the flowery years of youth in unprofitable danger and hardship! But such is the fact. When the war ended and he was on the point of taking his final departure, he presented himself to congress, and contemplating, in his affectionate farewell, the revolution he had seen, expressed himself in these words: “*May this great monument raised to Liberty serve as a lesson to the oppressor and an example to the oppressed!*” When this address came to the hands of Dr. Franklin who was then in France, he applied to Count Vergennes to have it inserted in the French gazette, but never could obtain his consent. The fact was that Count Vergennes was an aristocratical despot at home, and dreaded the example of the American revolution in France as certain other persons now dread the example of the French revolution in England; and Mr. Burke’s tribute of fear

(for in this light his book must be considered) runs parallel with Count Vergennes' refusal. But to return more particularly to his work.

"We have seen (says Mr. Burke) the French rebel against a mild and lawful monarch with more fury, outrage, and insult than any people has been known to raise against the most illegal usurper, or the most sanguinary tyrant." This is one among a thousand other instances in which Mr. Burke shows that he is ignorant of the springs and principles of the French revolution.

It was not against Louis XVI but against the despotic principle of the government that the nation revolted. These principles had not their origin in him, but in the original establishment, many centuries back; and they were become too deeply rooted to be removed, and the Augean stable of parasites and plunderers too abominably filthy to be cleansed, by anything short of a complete and universal revolution.

When it becomes necessary to do a thing, the whole heart should join in the measure, or it should not be attempted. That crisis was then arrived, and there remained no choice but to act with determined vigor or not to act at all. The king was known to be the friend of the nation, and this circumstance was favorable to the enterprise. Perhaps no man bred up in the style of an absolute king ever possessed a heart so little disposed to the exercise of that species of power as the present king of France. But the principles of the government itself still remained the same. The monarch and monarchy were distinct and separate things; and it was against the established despotism of the latter, and not against the person or principles of the former, that the revolt commenced, and the revolution has been carried on.

Mr. Burke does not attend to this distinction between men and principles, and therefore he does not see that a revolt may take place against the despotism of the latter, while there lies no charge of despotism against the former.

The natural moderation of Louis XVI contributed nothing to alter the hereditary despotism of the monarchy. All the tyrannies of former reigns, acted under that hereditary despotism, were still liable to be revived in the hands of a successor. It

was not the respite of a reign that would satisfy France, enlightened as she was then become. A casual discontinuance of the *practice* of despotism is not a discontinuance of its *principles*; the former depends on the virtue of the individual who is in immediate possession of the power; the latter on the virtue and fortitude of the nation. In the case of Charles I and James II of England, the revolt was against the personal despotism of the men; whereas in France it was against the hereditary despotism of the established government. But men who can consign over the rights of posterity forever on the authority of a mouldy parchment, like Mr. Burke, are not qualified to judge of this revolution. It takes in a field too vast for their views to explore, and proceeds with a mightiness of reason they cannot keep pace with.

But there are many points of view in which this revolution may be considered. When despotism has established itself for ages in a country, as in France, it is not in the person of the king only that it resides. It has the appearance of being so in show, and in nominal authority; but it is not so in practice and in fact. It has its standard everywhere. Every office and department has its despotism, founded upon custom and usage. Every place has its Bastile, and every Bastile its despot. The original hereditary despotism resident in the person of the king divides and sub-divides itself into a thousand shapes and forms, till at last the whole of it is acted by deputation. This was the case in France; and against this species of despotism, proceeding on through an endless labyrinth of office till the source of it is scarcely perceptible, there is no mode of redress. It strengthens itself by assuming the appearance of duty, and tyrannizes under the pretense of obeying.

When a man reflects on the condition which France was in from the nature of her government, he will see other causes for revolt than those which immediately connect themselves with the person or character of Louis XVI. There were, if I may so express it, a thousand despotisms to be reformed in France, which had grown up under the hereditary despotism of the monarchy, and become so rooted as to be in a great measure

independent of it. Between the monarchy, the parliament, and the church, there was a *rivalship* of despotism, besides the feudal despotism operating locally, and the ministerial despotism operating everywhere. But Mr. Burke, by considering the king as the only possible object of a revolt, speaks as if France was a village in which everything that passed must be known to its commanding officer and no oppression could be acted but what he could immediately control. Mr. Burke might have been in the Bastille his whole life, as well under Louis XVI as Louis XIV, and neither the one nor the other known that such a man as Mr. Burke existed. The despotic principles of the government were the same in both reigns, though the dispositions of the men were as remote as tyranny and benevolence.

What Mr. Burke considers as a reproach to the French revolution, that of bringing it forward under a reign more mild than the preceding ones, is one of its highest honors. The revolutions that have taken place in other European countries have been excited by personal hatred. The rage was against the man, and he became the victim. But, in the instance of France, we see a revolution generated in the rational contemplation of the rights of man, and distinguishing from the beginning between persons and principles.

But Mr. Burke appears to have no idea of principles, when he is contemplating governments. "Ten years ago," says he, "I could have felicitated France on her having a government, without inquiring what the nature of that government was, or how it was administered." Is this the language of a rational man? Is it the language of a heart feeling as it ought to feel for the rights and happiness of the human race? On this ground Mr. Burke must compliment every government in the world, while the victims who suffer under them, whether sold into slavery or tortured out of existence, are wholly forgotten. It is power and not principles that Mr. Burke venerates; and under this abominable depravity he is disqualified to judge between them. Thus much for his opinion as to the occasion of the French revolution. I now proceed to other considerations.

I know a place in America called Point-no-Point; because as

you proceed along the shore, gay and flowery as Mr. Burke's language, it continually recedes and presents itself at a distance ahead; and when you have got as far as you can go, there is no point at all. Just thus is it with Mr. Burke's three hundred and fifty-six pages. It is therefore difficult to reply to him. But as the points that he wishes to establish may be inferred from what he abuses, it is in his paradoxes that we must look for his arguments.

As to the tragic paintings by which Mr. Burke has outraged his own imagination and seeks to work upon that of his readers, they are very well calculated for theatrical representation, where facts are manufactured for the sake of show and accommodated to produce, through the weakness of sympathy, a weeping effect. But Mr. Burke should recollect that he is writing history, and not *plays*; and that his readers will expect truth, and not the spouting rant of high-toned exclamation.

When we see a man dramatically lamenting, in a publication intended to be believed, that "*The age of chivalry is gone;*" that "*the glory of Europe is extinguished forever!*" that "*the unbought grace of life (if anyone knows what it is), the cheap defense of nations, the nurse of manly sentiment and heroic enterprise is gone!*"—and all this because the Quixote age of chivalric nonsense is gone; what opinion can we form of his judgment, or what regard can we pay to his facts? In the rhapsody of his imagination he has discovered a world of windmills, and his sorrows are that there are no Quixotes to attack them. But if the age of aristocracy, like that of chivalry, should fall, and they had originally some connection, Mr. Burke, the trumpeter of the order, may continue his parody to the end, and finish with exclaiming—"*Othello's occupation's gone!*"

Notwithstanding Mr. Burke's horrid paintings, when the French revolution is compared with that of other countries the astonishment will be that it is marked with so few sacrifices; but this astonishment will cease when we reflect that it was *principles*, and not *persons*, that were the meditated objects of destruction. The mind of the nation was acted upon by a higher stimulus than what the consideration of persons could

inspire, and sought a higher conquest than could be produced by the downfall of an enemy. Among the few who fell, there do not appear to be any that were intentionally singled out. They all of them had their fate in the circumstances of the moment, and were not pursued with that long, cold-blooded, unabated revenge which pursued the unfortunate Scotch in the affair of 1745.

### [THE DESTRUCTION OF THE BASTILE]

Through the whole of Mr. Burke's book I do not observe that the Bastile is mentioned more than once, and that with a kind of implication as if he was sorry it is pulled down, and wished it was built up again. "We have rebuilt Newgate (says he) and tenanted the mansion; and we have prisons almost as strong as the Bastile for those who dare to libel the queen of France."<sup>1</sup> As to what a madman, like the person called Lord George Gordon, might say, and to whom Newgate is rather a bedlam than a prison, it is unworthy a rational consideration. It was a madman that libelled—and that is sufficient apology, and it afforded an opportunity for confining him, which was the thing wished for; but certain it is that Mr. Burke, who does not call himself a madman, whatever other people may do, has libelled, in the most unprovoked manner and in the grossest style of the most vulgar abuse, the whole representative authority of France; and yet Mr. Burke takes his seat in the British house of commons! From his violence and his grief, his silence on some points and his excess on others, it is difficult not to

<sup>1</sup>Since writing the above, two other places occur in Mr. Burke's pamphlet in which the name of Bastile is mentioned but in the same manner. In the one, he introduces it in a sort of obscure question, and asks—"Will any ministers who now serve such a king with but a decent appearance of respect, cordially obey the orders of those whom but the other day, in his name, they had committed to the Bastile?" In the other, the taking it is mentioned as implying criminality in the French guards who assisted in demolishing it. "They have not," says he, "forgot the taking the king's castles at Paris." This is Mr. Burke, who pretends to write on constitutional freedom. [Paine's note.]

believe that Mr. Burke is sorry, extremely sorry, that arbitrary power, the power of the pope and the Bastile, are pulled down.

Not one glance of compassion, not one commiserating reflection, that I can find throughout his book, has he bestowed on those that lingered out the most wretched of lives, a life without hope, in the most miserable of prisons. It is painful to behold a man employing his talents to corrupt himself. Nature has been kinder to Mr. Burke than he has to her. He is not affected by the reality of distress touching upon his heart, but by the showy resemblance of it striking his imagination. He pities the plumage, but forgets the dying bird. Accustomed to kiss the aristocratical hand that hath purloined him from himself, he degenerates into a composition of art, and the genuine soul of nature forsakes him. His hero or his heroine must be a tragedy-victim, expiring in show, and not the real prisoner of misery, sliding into death in the silence of a dungeon.

As Mr. Burke has passed over the whole transaction of the Bastile (and his silence is nothing in his favor) and has entertained his readers with reflections on supposed facts, distorted into real falsehoods, I will give, since he has not, some account of the circumstances which preceded that transaction. They will serve to show that less mischief could scarce have accompanied such an event, when considered with the treacherous and hostile aggravations of the enemies of the revolution.

The mind can hardly picture to itself a more tremendous scene than what the city of Paris exhibited at the time of taking the Bastile, and for two days before and after, nor conceive the possibility of its quieting so soon. At a distance, this transaction has appeared only as an act of heroism standing on itself; and the close political connection it had with the revolution is lost in the brilliancy of the achievement. But we are to consider it as the strength of the parties, brought man to man, and contending for the issue. The Bastile was to be either the prize or the prison of the assailants. The downfall of it included the idea of the downfall of despotism; and this compounded image was become as figuratively united, as Bunyan's Doubting Castle and Giant Despair.

The national assembly, before and at the time of taking the Bastille, was sitting at Versailles, twelve miles distant from Paris. About a week before the rising of the Parisians and their taking the Bastille, it was discovered that a plot was forming, at the head of which was the Count d'Artois, the king's youngest brother, for demolishing the national assembly, seizing its members, and thereby crushing by a *coup de main* all hopes and prospects of forming a free government. For the sake of humanity, as well as of freedom, it is well this plan did not succeed. Examples are not wanting to show how dreadfully vindictive and cruel are all old governments, when they are successful against what they call a revolt.

This plan must have been some time in contemplation; because, in order to carry it into execution, it was necessary to collect a large military force round Paris, and to cut off the communication between that city and the national assembly at Versailles. The troops destined for this service were chiefly the foreign troops in the pay of France, and who, for this particular purpose, were drawn from the distant provinces where they were then stationed. When they were collected, to the amount of between twenty-five and thirty thousand, it was judged time to put the plan in execution. The ministry who were then in office, and who were friendly to the revolution, were instantly dismissed, and a new ministry formed of those who had concerted the project:—among whom was Count de Broglio, and to his share was given the command of those troops. The character of this man, as described to me in a letter which I communicated to Mr. Burke before he began to write his book, and from an authority which Mr. Burke well knows was good, was that of “a high-flying aristocrat, cool, and capable of every mischief.”

While these matters were agitating, the national assembly stood in the most perilous and critical situation that a body of men can be supposed to act in. They were the devoted victims, and they knew it. They had the hearts and wishes of their country on their side, but military authority they had none. The guards of Broglio surrounded the hall where the assembly

Matters being now ripe for execution, the new ministry made their appearance in office. The reader will carry in his mind that the Bastille was taken the 14th of July; the point of time I am now speaking to is the 12th. As soon as the news of the change of the ministry reached Paris in the afternoon, all the playhouses and places of entertainment, shops and houses, were shut up. The change of ministry was considered as the prelude of hostilities, and the opinion was rightly founded.

The foreign troops began to advance towards the city. The prince de Lambesc, who commanded a body of German cavalry, approached by the palace of Louis XV which connects itself with some of the streets. In his march he insulted and struck an old man with his sword. The French are remarkable for their respect to old age, and the insolence with which it appeared to be done, uniting with the general fermentation they were in, produced a powerful effect, and a cry of *to arms! to arms!* spread itself in a moment over the whole city.

Arms they had none, nor scarcely any who knew the use of them; but desperate resolution, when every hope is at stake, supplies, for a while, the want of arms. Near where the prince de Lambesc was drawn up, were large piles of stones collected for building the new bridge, and with these the people attacked the cavalry. A party of the French guards, upon hearing the firing, rushed from their quarters and joined the people; and night coming on, the cavalry retreated.

The streets of Paris, being narrow, are favorable for defense; and the loftiness of the houses, consisting of many stories, from which great annoyance might be given, secured them against nocturnal enterprises; and the night was spent in providing themselves with every sort of weapon they could make or procure—guns, swords, blacksmiths' hammers, carpenters' axes, iron crows, pikes, halberds, pitchforks, spits, clubs, &c.

The incredible numbers with which they assembled the next morning, and the still more incredible resolution they exhibited, embarrassed and astonished their enemies. Little did the new ministry expect such a salute. Accustomed to slavery themselves, they had no idea that liberty was capable of such inspira-

tion, or that a body of unarmed citizens would dare to face the military force of thirty thousand men. Every moment of this day was employed in collecting arms, concerting plans, and arranging themselves in the best order which such an instantaneous movement could afford. Broglio continued lying round the city, but made no further advances this day, and the succeeding night passed with as much tranquillity as such a scene could possibly produce.

But the defense only was not the object of the citizens. They had a cause at stake, on which depended their freedom or their slavery. They every moment expected an attack, or to hear of one made on the national assembly; and in such a situation the most prompt measures are sometimes the best. The object that now presented itself was the Bastile; and the *éclat* of carrying such a fortress in the face of such an army could not fail to strike terror into the new ministry, who had scarcely yet had time to meet. By some intercepted correspondence this morning, it was discovered that the mayor of Paris, M. de Flesselles, who appeared to be in their interest, was betraying them; and from this discovery there remained no doubt that Broglio would reinforce the Bastile the ensuing evening. It was therefore necessary to attack it that day; but before this could be done, it was first necessary to procure a better supply of arms than they were then possessed of.

There was, adjoining to the city, a large magazine of arms deposited at the hospital of the invalids, which the citizens summoned to surrender; and as the place was not defensible, nor attempted much defense, they soon succeeded. Thus supplied, they marched to attack the Bastile; a vast mixed multitude of all ages and of all degrees, and armed with all sorts of weapons. Imagination would fail of describing to itself the appearance of such a procession, and of the anxiety for the events which a few hours or a few minutes might produce. What plans the ministry was forming were as unknown to the people within the city as what the citizens were doing was unknown to them; and what movements Broglio might make for the support or relief of the place were to the citizens equally unknown. All was mystery and hazard.

That the Bastille was attacked with an enthusiasm of heroism such only as the highest animation of liberty could inspire, and carried in the space of a few hours, is an event which the world is fully possessed of. I am not undertaking a detail of the attack, but bringing into view the conspiracy against the nation which provoked it, and which fell with the Bastille. The prison to which the new ministry were dooming the national assembly, in addition to its being the high altar and castle of despotism, became the proper object to begin with. This enterprise broke up the new ministry, who began now to fly from the ruin they had prepared for others. The troops of Broglio dispersed, and himself fled also.

Mr. Burke has spoken a great deal about plots, but he has never once spoken of this plot against the national assembly and the liberties of the nation; and that he might not, he has passed over all the circumstances that might throw it in his way. The exiles who have fled from France, whose cause he so much interests himself in, and from whom he has had his lesson, fled in consequence of the miscarriage of this plot. No plot was formed against them: it was they who were plotting against others; and those who fell met, not unjustly, the punishment they were preparing to execute. But will Mr. Burke say that if this plot, contrived with the subtlety of an ambuscade, had succeeded, the successful party would have restrained their wrath so soon? Let the history of all old governments answer the question.

Whom has the national assembly brought to the scaffold? None. They were themselves the devoted victims of this plot, and they have not retaliated; why then are they charged with revenge they have not acted? In the tremendous breaking forth of a whole people, in which all degrees, tempers, and characters are confounded, and delivering themselves by a miracle of exertion from the destruction meditated against them, is it to be expected that nothing will happen? When men are sore with the sense of oppressions, and menaced with the prospect of new ones, is the calmness of philosophy, or the palsy of insensibility to be looked for? Mr. Burke exclaims against outrage, yet the greatest is that which he has committed. His

book is a volume of outrage, not apologized for by the impulse of a moment, but cherished through a space of ten months; yet Mr. Burke had no provocation, no life, no interest at stake.

More citizens fell in this struggle than of their opponents; but four or five persons were seized by the populace and instantly put to death; the governor of the Bastille and the mayor of Paris, who was detected in the act of betraying them; and afterwards Foulon, one of the new ministry, and Berthier, his son-in-law, who had accepted the office of intendant of Paris. Their heads were stuck upon pikes and carried about the city; and it is upon this mode of punishment that Mr. Burke builds a great part of his tragic scenes. Let us therefore examine how men came by the idea of punishing in this manner.

They learn it from the governments they live under; and retaliate the punishments they have been accustomed to behold. The heads stuck upon pikes, which remained for years upon Temple Bar, differed nothing in the horror of the scene from those carried about on pikes at Paris: yet this was done by the English government. It may, perhaps, be said that it signifies nothing to a man what is done to him after he is dead; but it signifies much to the living; it either tortures their feelings or hardens their hearts; and in either case it instructs them how to punish when power falls into their hands.

Lay then the axe to the root; and teach governments humanity. It is their sanguinary punishments which corrupt mankind. In England, the punishment in certain cases is by *hanging, drawing, and quartering*; the heart of the sufferer is cut out, and held up to the view of the populace. In France, under the former government, the punishments were not less barbarous. Who does not remember the execution of Damien, torn to pieces by horses? The effect of these cruel spectacles, exhibited to the populace, is to destroy tenderness or excite revenge; and by the base and false idea of governing men by terror instead of reason, they become precedents. It is over the lowest class of mankind that government by terror is intended to operate, and it is on them that it operates to the worst effect. They have sense enough to feel that they are the objects aimed at; and they

inflict in their turn the examples of terror they have been instructed to practice.

There are in all European countries a large class of people of that description which in England are called the "*mob*." Of this class were those who committed the burnings and devastations in London in 1780, and of this class were those who carried the heads upon pikes in Paris. Foulon and Berthier were taken up in the country, and sent to Paris to undergo their examination at the *hôtel de ville*; for the national assembly, immediately on the new ministry coming into office, passed a decree, which they communicated to the king and cabinet, that they (the national assembly) would hold the ministry, of which Foulon was one, responsible for the measures they were advising and pursuing; but the mob, incensed at the appearance of Foulon and Berthier, tore them from their conductors before they were carried to the *hôtel de ville*, and executed them on the spot. Why then does Mr. Burke charge outrages of this kind upon a whole people? As well may he charge the riots and outrages of 1780 on all the people of London, or those in Ireland on all his country.

But everything we see or hear offensive to our feelings and derogatory to the human character should lead to other reflections than those of reproach. Even the beings who commit them have some claim to our consideration. How then is it that such vast classes of mankind as are distinguished by the appellation of the vulgar, or the ignorant mob, are so numerous in all old countries? The instant we ask ourselves this question, reflection finds an answer. They arise, as an unavoidable consequence, out of the ill construction of all the old governments in Europe, England included with the rest. It is by distortedly exalting some men that others are distortedly debased, till the whole is out of nature. A vast mass of mankind are degradedly thrown into the background of the human picture, to bring forward, with greater glare, the puppet show of state and aristocracy. In the commencement of a revolution, those men are rather the followers of the *camp* than of the *standard* of liberty, and have yet to be instructed how to reverence it.

I give to Mr. Burke all his theatrical exaggerations for facts, and I then ask him if they do not establish the certainty of what I here lay down? Admitting them to be true, they show the necessity of the French revolution, as much as any one thing he could have asserted. These outrages are not the effect of the principles of the revolution, but of the degraded mind that existed before the revolution, and which the revolution is calculated to reform. Place them then to their proper cause, and take the reproach of them to your own side.

It is to the honor of the national assembly and the city of Paris that during such a tremendous scene of arms and confusion, beyond the control of all authority, that they have been able, by the influence of example and exhortation, to restrain so much. Never was more pains taken to instruct and enlighten mankind and to make them see that their interest consisted in their virtue, and not in their revenge, than what have been displayed in the revolution of France.

I now proceed to make some remarks on Mr. Burke's account of the expedition to Versailles, on the 5th and 6th of October.

I can consider Mr. Burke's book in scarcely any other light than a dramatic performance; and he must, I think, have considered it in the same light himself, by the poetical liberties he has taken of omitting some facts, distorting others, and making the machinery bend to produce a stage effect. Of this kind is his account of the expedition to Versailles. He begins this account by omitting the only facts which, as causes, are known to be true; everything beyond these is conjecture even in Paris: and he then works up a tale accommodated to his own passions and prejudices.

It is to be observed throughout Mr. Burke's book that he never speaks of plots *against* the revolution; and it is from those plots that all the mischiefs have arisen. It suits his purpose to exhibit consequences without their causes. It is one of the arts of the drama to do so. If the crimes of men were exhibited with their suffering, the stage effect would sometimes be lost, and the audience would be inclined to approve where it was intended they should commiserate.

After all the investigations that have been made into this intricate affair (the expedition to Versailles), it still remains enveloped in all that kind of mystery which ever accompanies events produced more from a concurrence of awkward circumstances than from fixed design. While the characters of men are forming, as is always the case in revolutions, there is a reciprocal suspicion, and a disposition to misinterpret each other; and even parties directly opposite in principle will sometimes concur in pushing forward the same movement with very different views, and with the hopes of its producing very different consequences. A great deal of this may be discovered in this embarrassed affair, and yet the issue of the whole was what nobody had in view.

The only things certainly known are that considerable uneasiness was at this time excited in Paris by the delay of the king in not sanctioning and forwarding the decrees of the national assembly, particularly that of the *declaration of the rights of man*, and the decrees of the *fourth of August*, which contained the foundation principles on which the constitution was to be erected. The kindest and perhaps the fairest conjecture upon this matter is that some of the ministers intended to make observations upon certain parts of them, before they were finally sanctioned and sent to the provinces; but be this as it may, the enemies of the revolution derived hopes from the delay, and the friends of the revolution, uneasiness.

During this state of suspense, the *gardes du corps*, which was composed, as such regiments generally are, of persons much connected with the court, gave an entertainment at Versailles (Oct. 1) to some foreign regiments then arrived; and when the entertainment was at its height, on a signal given, the *gardes du corps* tore the national cockade from their hats, trampled it under foot, and replaced it with a counter cockade prepared for the purpose. An indignity of this kind amounted to defiance. It was like declaring war; and if men will give challenges, they must expect consequences. But all this Mr. Burke has carefully kept out of sight. He begins his account by saying, "History will record that on the morning of the 6th of October, 1789,

the king and queen of France, after a day of confusion, alarm, dismay and slaughter, lay down, under the pledged security of public faith, to indulge nature in a few hours of respite and troubled melancholy repose." This is neither the sober style of history, nor the intention of it. It leaves everything to be guessed at, and mistaken. One would at least think there had been a battle; and a battle there probably would have been had it not been for the moderating prudence of those whom Mr. Burke involves in his censures. By his keeping the *gardes du corps* out of sight Mr. Burke has afforded himself the dramatic license of putting the king and queen in their places, as if the object of the expedition was against them. But, to return to my account—

This conduct of the *gardes du corps*, as might well be expected, alarmed and enraged the Parisians; the colors of the cause and the cause itself were become too united to mistake the intention of the insult, and the Parisians were determined to call the *gardes du corps* to an account. There was certainly nothing of the cowardice of assassination in marching in the face of day to demand satisfaction, if such a phrase may be used, of a body of armed men who had voluntarily given defiance. But the circumstance which serves to throw this affair into embarrassment is that the enemies of the revolution appear to have encouraged it, as well as its friends. The one hoped to prevent a civil war by checking it in time, and the other to make one. The hopes of those opposed to the revolution rested in making the king of their party, and getting him from Versailles to Metz, where they expected to collect a force and set up a standard. We have therefore two different objects presenting themselves at the same time, and to be accomplished by the same means; the one, to chastise the *gardes du corps* which was the object of the Parisians; the other, to render the confusion of such a scene an inducement to the king to set off for Metz.

On the 5th of October a very numerous body of women, and men in the disguise of women, collected round the *hôtel de ville*, or town hall, at Paris, and set off for Versailles. Their professed object was the *gardes du corps*; but prudent men readily

recollected that mischief is easier begun than ended; and this impressed itself with the more force, from the suspicions already stated and the irregularity of such a cavalcade. As soon therefore as a sufficient force could be collected, M. de la Fayette, by orders from the civil authority of Paris, set off after them at the head of twenty thousand of the Paris militia. The revolution could derive no benefit from confusion, and its opposers might. By an amiable and spirited manner of address, he had hitherto been fortunate in calming disquietudes, and in this he was extraordinarily successful; to frustrate, therefore, the hopes of those who might seek to improve this scene into a sort of justifiable necessity for the king's quitting Versailles and withdrawing to Metz, and to prevent at the same time the consequences that might ensue between the *gardes du corps* and this phalanx of men and women, he forwarded expresses to the king that he was on his march to Versailles, by the orders of the civil authority of Paris, for the purpose of peace and protection, expressing at the same time the necessity of restraining the *gardes du corps* from firing on the people.<sup>1</sup>

He arrived at Versailles between ten and eleven o'clock at night. The *gardes du corps* were drawn up, and the people had arrived some time before, but everything had remained suspended. Wisdom and policy now consisted in changing a scene of danger into a happy event. M. de la Fayette became the mediator between the enraged parties; and the king, to remove the uneasiness which had arisen from the delay already stated, sent for the president of the national assembly, and signed the *declaration of the rights of man* and such other parts of the constitution as were in readiness.

It was now about one in the morning. Everything appeared to be composed, and a general congratulation took place. At the beat of drum a proclamation was made that the citizens of Versailles would give the hospitality of their houses to their fellow-citizens of Paris. Those who could not be accommo-

<sup>1</sup>I am warranted in asserting this, as I had it from M. de la Fayette, with whom I have lived in habits of friendship for fourteen years. [Paine's note.]

dated in this manner, remained in the streets, or took up their quarters in the churches; and at two o'clock the king and queen retired.

In this state matters passed until the break of day, when a fresh disturbance arose from the censurable conduct of some of both parties; for such characters there will be in all such scenes. One of the *gardes du corps* appeared at one of the windows of the palace, and the people who had remained during the night in the streets accosted him with reviling and provocative language. Instead of retiring, as in such a case prudence would have dictated, he presented his musket, fired, and killed one of the Paris militia. The peace being thus broken, the people rushed into the palace in quest of the offender. They attacked the quarters of the *gardes du corps* within the palace, and pursued them through the avenues of it, and to the apartments of the king. On this tumult, not the queen only, as Mr. Burke has represented it, but every person in the palace, was awakened and alarmed; and M. de la Fayette had a second time to interpose between the parties, the event of which was, that the *gardes du corps* put on the national cockade, and the matter ended, as by oblivion, after the loss of two or three lives.

During the latter part of the time in which this confusion was acting, the king and queen were in public at the balcony, and neither of them concealed for safety's sake, as Mr. Burke insinuates. Matters being thus appeased, and tranquillity restored, a general acclamation broke forth, of *le roi à Paris—le roi à Paris*—the king to Paris. It was the shout of peace, and immediately accepted on the part of the king. By this measure all future projects of trepanning the king to Metz and setting up the standard of opposition to the constitution were prevented, and the suspicions extinguished. The king and his family reached Paris in the evening, and were congratulated on their arrival by M. Bailley, the mayor of Paris, in the name of the citizens. Mr. Burke, who throughout his book confounds things, persons, and principles, has, in his remarks on M. Bailley's address, confounded time also. He censures M. Bailley for calling it "*un bon jour*," a good day. Mr. Burke should have

informed himself that this scene took up the space of two days, the day on which it began with every appearance of danger and mischief, and the day on which it terminated without the mischiefs that threatened; and that it is to this peaceful termination that M. Bailley alludes, and to the arrival of the king at Paris. Not less than three hundred thousand persons arranged themselves in the procession from Versailles to Paris, and not an act of molestation was committed during the whole march. . . .

[ON THE NATURE AND ORIGIN OF RIGHTS]

Before anything can be reasoned upon to a conclusion, certain facts, principles, or data, to reason from, must be established, admitted, or denied. Mr. Burke, with his usual outrage, abuses the *declaration of the rights of man*, published by the national assembly of France as the basis on which the constitution of France is built. This he calls "paltry and blurred sheets of paper about the rights of man." Does Mr. Burke mean to deny that *man* has any rights? If he does, then he must mean that there are no such things as rights anywhere, and that he has none himself; for who is there in the world but man? But if Mr. Burke means to admit that man has rights, the question then will be, what are those rights, and how came man by them originally?

The error of those who reason by precedents drawn from antiquity, respecting the rights of man, is that they do not go far enough into antiquity. They do not go the whole way. They stop in some of the intermediate stages of a hundred or a thousand years, and produce what was then done as a rule for the present day. This is no authority at all. If we travel still further into antiquity, we shall find a directly contrary opinion and practice prevailing; and if antiquity is to be authority, a thousand such authorities may be produced, successively contradicting each other: but if we proceed on, we shall at last come out right: we shall come to the time when man came from the hand of his maker. What was he then? Man. Man was his high and only title, and a higher cannot be given him. But of titles I shall speak hereafter.

We have now arrived at the origin of man, and at the origin

of his rights. As to the manner in which the world has been governed from that day to this, it is no further any concern of ours than to make a proper use of the errors or the improvements which the history of it presents. Those who lived a hundred or a thousand years ago were then moderns as we are now. They had *their* ancients and those ancients had others, and we also shall be ancients in our turn. If the mere name of antiquity is to govern in the affairs of life, the people who are to live a hundred or a thousand years hence may as well take us for a precedent, as we make a precedent of those who lived a hundred or a thousand years ago. The fact is that portions of antiquity, by proving everything, establish nothing. It is authority against authority all the way till we come to the divine origin of the rights of man at the creation. Here our inquiries find a resting-place, and our reason finds a home. If a dispute about the rights of man had arisen at the distance of a hundred years from the creation, it is to this source of authority they must have referred, and it is to the same source of authority that we must now refer.

Though I mean not to touch upon any sectarian principle of religion, yet it may be worth observing that the genealogy of Christ is traced to Adam. Why then not trace the rights of man to the creation of man? I will answer the question. Because there have been an upstart of governments, thrusting themselves between, and presumptuously working to *un-make* man.

If any generation of men ever possessed the right of dictating the mode by which the world should be governed forever, it was the first generation that existed; and if that generation did not do it, no succeeding generation can show any authority for doing it, nor set any up. The illuminating and divine principles of the equal rights of man (for it has its origin from the maker of man) relates, not only to the living individuals, but to generations of men succeeding each other. Every generation is equal in rights to the generations which preceded it, by the same rule that every individual is born equal in rights with his contemporary.

Every history of the creation, and every traditionary account, whether from the lettered or unlettered world, however they may vary in their opinion or belief of certain particulars, all agree in establishing one point, *the unity of man*; by which I mean that man is all of *one degree*, and consequently that all men are born equal and with equal natural rights, in the same manner as if posterity had been continued by *creation* instead of *generation*, the latter being only the mode by which the former is carried forward; and consequently every child born into the world must be considered as deriving its existence from God. The world is as new to him as it was to the first man that existed, and his natural right in it is of the same kind.

The Mosaic account of the creation, whether taken as divine authority, or merely historical, is fully up to this point, *the unity or equality of man*. The expressions admit of no controversy. "And God said, let us make man in our own image. In the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." The distinction of sexes is pointed out, but no other distinction is even implied. If this be not divine authority, it is at least historical authority, and shows that the equality of man, so far from being a modern doctrine, is the oldest upon record.

It is also to be observed that all the religions known in the world are founded, so far as they relate to man, on the *unity of man* as being all of one degree. Whether in heaven or in hell or in whatever state man may be supposed to exist hereafter, the good and the bad are the only distinctions. Nay, even the laws of governments are obliged to slide into this principle by making degrees to consist in crimes and not in persons.

It is one of the greatest of all truths, and of the highest advantage to cultivate. By considering man in this light, and by instructing him to consider himself in this light, it places him in a close connection with all his duties, whether to his creator, or to the creation of which he is a part; and it is only when he forgets his origin or, to use a more fashionable phrase, his *birth and family*, that he becomes dissolute. It is not among the least of the evils of the present existing governments in all parts of Europe, that man, considered as man, is thrown back to a vast

distance from his maker, and the artificial chasm filled up by a succession of barriers, or a sort of turnpike gates, through which he has to pass. I will quote Mr. Burke's catalogue of barriers that he has set up between man and his maker. Putting himself in the character of a herald, he says, "We fear God—we look with *awe* to kings—with affection to parliaments—with duty to magistrates—with reverence to priests, and with respect to nobility." Mr. Burke has forgot to put in "chivalry." He has also forgot to put in Peter.

The duty of man is not a wilderness of turnpike gates through which he is to pass by tickets from one to the other. It is plain and simple, and consists but of two points. His duty to God, which every man must feel; and with respect to his neighbor, to do as he would be done by. If those to whom power is delegated do well, they will be respected; if not they will be despised; and with regard to those to whom no power is delegated, but who assume it, the rational world can know nothing of them.

Hitherto we have spoken only (and that but in part) of the natural rights of man. We have now to consider the civil rights of man, and to show how the one originates out of the other. Man did not enter into society to become *worse* than he was before, nor to have less rights than he had before, but to have those rights better secured. His natural rights are the foundation of all his civil rights. But in order to pursue this distinction with more precision, it is necessary to mark the different qualities of natural and civil rights.

A few words will explain this. Natural rights are those which always appertain to man in right of his existence. Of this kind are all the intellectual rights, or rights of the mind, and also all those rights of acting as an individual for his own comfort and happiness, which are not injurious to the rights of others. Civil rights are those which appertain to man in right of his being a member of society. Every civil right has for its foundation some natural right pre-existing in the individual, but to which his individual power is not, in all cases, sufficiently competent. Of this kind are all those which relate to security and protection.

From this short review, it will be easy to distinguish between that class of natural rights which man retains after entering into society and those which he throws into common stock as a member of society.

The natural rights which he retains are all those in which the power to execute is as perfect in the individual as the right itself. Among this class, as is before mentioned, are all the intellectual rights, or rights of the mind: consequently, religion is one of those rights. The natural rights which are not retained are all those in which, though the right is perfect in the individual, the power to execute them is defective. They answer not his purpose. A man, by natural right, has a right to judge in his own cause; and so far as the right of the mind is concerned, he never surrenders it: but what availeth it him to judge, if he has not power to redress? He therefore deposits this right in the common stock of society, and takes the arm of society, of which he is a part, in preference and in addition to his own. Society *grants* him nothing. Every man is a proprietor in society, and draws on the capital as a matter of right.

From these premises, two or three certain conclusions will follow.

1st, That every civil right grows out of a natural right; or, in other words, is a natural right exchanged.

2d, That civil power, properly considered as such, is made up of the aggregate of that class of the natural rights of man which becomes defective in the individual in point of power, and answers not his purpose, but when collected to a focus, becomes competent to the purpose of everyone.

3d, That the power produced by the aggregate of natural rights, imperfect in power in the individual, cannot be applied to invade the natural rights which are retained in the individual, and in which the power to execute is as perfect as the right itself.

We have now, in a few words, traced man from a natural individual to a member of society, and shown, or endeavored to show, the quality of the natural rights retained and of those which are exchanged for civil rights. Let us now apply those principles to government.

In casting our eyes over the world, it is extremely easy to distinguish the governments which have arisen out of society, or out of the social compact, from those which have not: but to place this in a clearer light than what a single glance may afford, it will be proper to take a review of the several sources from which governments have arisen and on which they have been founded.

They may be all comprehended under three heads: 1st, superstition; 2d, power; 3d, the common interests of society, and the common rights of man.

The first was a government of priestcraft, the second of conquerors, and the third of reason.

When a set of artful men pretended, through the medium of oracles, to hold intercourse with the deity as familiarly as they now march up the back stairs in European courts, the world was completely under the government of superstition. The oracles were consulted, and whatever they were made to say became the law; and this sort of government lasted just as long as this sort of superstition lasted.

After these a race of conquerors arose, whose government, like that of William the Conqueror, was founded in power, and the sword assumed the name of a scepter. Governments thus established last as long as the power to support them lasts; but that they might avail themselves of every engine in their favor, they united fraud to force, and set up an idol which they called *divine right*, and which, in imitation of the pope who affects to be spiritual and temporal, and in contradiction to the founder of the Christian religion, twisted itself afterwards into an idol of another shape, called *church and state*. The key of St. Peter and the key of the treasury became quartered on one another, and the wondering, cheated multitude, worshipped the invention.

When I contemplate the natural dignity of man; when I feel (for nature has not been kind enough to me to blunt my feelings) for the honor and happiness of its character, I become irritated at the attempt to govern mankind by force and fraud as if they were all knaves and fools, and can scarcely avoid feeling disgust for those who are thus imposed upon.

We have now to review the governments which arise out of society, in contradistinction to those which arose out of superstition and conquest.

It has been thought a considerable advance towards establishing the principles of freedom, to say that government is a compact between those who govern and those who are governed: but this cannot be true, because it is putting the effect before the cause; for as man must have existed before governments existed, there necessarily was a time when governments did not exist, and consequently there could originally exist no governors to form such a compact with. The fact therefore must be that the *individuals themselves*, each in his own personal and sovereign right, *entered into a compact with each other* to produce a government: and this is the only mode in which governments have a right to be established; and the only principle on which they have a right to exist.

To possess ourselves of a clear idea of what government is or ought to be, we must trace it to its origin. In doing this we shall easily discover that governments must have arisen, either *out of* the people, or *over* the people. Mr. Burke has made no distinction. He investigates nothing to its source, and therefore he confounds everything: but he has signified his intention of undertaking, at some future opportunity, a comparison between the constitutions of England and France. As he thus renders it a subject of controversy by throwing the gauntlet, I take him up on his own ground. It is in high challenges that high truths have the right of appearing; and I accept it with the more readiness, because it affords me, at the same time, an opportunity of pursuing the subject with respect to governments arising out of society.

But it will be first necessary to define what is meant by a *constitution*. It is not sufficient that we adopt the word; we must fix also a standard signification to it.

A constitution is not a thing in name only, but in fact. It has not an ideal, but a real existence; and wherever it cannot be produced in a visible form there is none. A constitution is a thing antecedent to a government, and a government is only

the creature of a constitution. The constitution of a country is not the act of its government, but of the people constituting a government. It is the body of elements, to which you can refer, and quote article by article; and contains the principles on which the government shall be established, the form in which it shall be organized, the powers it shall have, the mode of elections, the duration of parliaments, or by what other name such bodies may be called; the powers which the executive part of the government shall have; and, in fine, everything that relates to the complete organization of a civil government, and the principle on which it shall act, and by which it shall be bound. A constitution, therefore, is to a government what the laws made afterwards by that government are to a court of judicature. The court of judicature does not make laws, neither can it alter them; it only acts in conformity to the laws made; and the government is in like manner governed by the constitution.

#### [THE ENGLISH AND FRENCH CONSTITUTIONS]

Can then Mr. Burke produce the English constitution? If he cannot, we may fairly conclude that though it has been so much talked about, no such thing as a constitution exists, or ever did exist, and consequently the people have yet a constitution to form.

Mr. Burke will not, I presume, deny the position I have already advanced; namely, that governments arise either *out of* the people, or *over* the people. The English government is one of those which arose out of a conquest, and not out of society, and consequently it arose over the people; and though it has been much modified from the opportunity of circumstances since the time of William the Conqueror, the country has never yet regenerated itself, and it is therefore without a constitution.

I readily perceive the reason why Mr. Burke declined going into the comparison between the English and the French constitutions, because he could not but perceive, when he sat down to

the task, that no constitution was in existence on his side of the question. His book is certainly bulky enough to have contained all he could say on this subject, and it would have been the best manner in which people could have judged of their separate merits. Why then has he declined the only thing that was worth while to write upon? It was the strongest ground he could take if the advantages were on his side, but the weakest if they were not; and his declining to take it is either a sign that he could not possess it or could not maintain it.

Mr. Burke has said in his speech last winter in parliament, that when the national assembly of France first met in three orders (the *tiers états*, the clergy, and the *noblesse*), that France had then a good constitution. This shows, among numerous other instances, that Mr. Burke does not understand what a constitution is. The persons so met were not a *constitution*, but a *convention* to make a constitution.

The present national assembly of France is, strictly speaking, the personal social compact. The members of it are the delegates of the nation in its *original* character; future assemblies will be the delegates of the nation in its *organized* character. The authority of the present assembly is different to what the authority of future assemblies will be. The authority of the present one is to form a constitution: the authority of future assemblies will be to legislate according to the principles and forms prescribed in that constitution; and if experience should hereafter show that alterations, amendments, or additions are necessary, the constitution will point out the mode by which such things shall be done, and not leave it to the discretionary power of the future government.

A government on the principles on which constitutional governments, arising out of society, are established, cannot have the right of altering itself. If it had, it would be arbitrary. It might make itself what it pleased; and wherever such a right is set up, it shows that there is no constitution. The act by which the English parliament empowered itself to sit for seven years shows there is no constitution in England. It might, by the selfsame authority, have sat any greater number of years or for

life. The bill which the present Mr. Pitt brought into parliament some years ago, to reform parliament, was on the same erroneous principle.

The right of reform is in the nation in its original character, and the constitutional method would be by a general convention elected for the purpose. There is moreover a paradox in the idea of vitiated bodies reforming themselves.

From these preliminaries I proceed to draw some comparisons. I have already spoken of the declaration of rights; and as I mean to be as concise as possible, I shall proceed to other parts of the French constitution.

The constitution of France says that every man who pays a tax of sixty sous per annum (2s. and 6d. English) is an elector. What article will Mr. Burke place against this? Can anything be more limited, and at the same time more capricious, than what the qualifications of electors are in England? Limited—because not one man in a hundred (I speak much within compass) is admitted to vote: capricious—because the lowest character that can be supposed to exist, and who has not so much as the visible means of an honest livelihood, is an elector in some places; while, in other places, the man who pays very large taxes, and with a fair known character, and the farmer who rents to the amount of three or four hundred pounds a year, and with a property on that farm to three or four times that amount, is not admitted to be an elector. Everything is out of nature, as Mr. Burke says on another occasion, in this strange chaos, and all sorts of follies are blended with all sorts of crimes. William the Conqueror and his descendants parcelled out the country in this manner, and bribed one part of it, by what they called charters, to hold the other parts of it the better subjected to their will. This is the reason why so many charters abound in Cornwall. The people were averse to the government established at the conquest, and the towns were garrisoned and bribed to enslave the country. All the old charters are the badges of this conquest, and it is from this source that the capriciousness of election arises.

The French constitution says that the number of representa-

tives for any place shall be in a ratio to the number of taxable inhabitants or electors. What article will Mr. Burke place against this? The county of Yorkshire, which contains near a million of souls, sends two county members; and so does the county of Rutland, which contains not a hundredth part of that number. The town of old Sarum, which contains not three houses, sends two members; and the town of Manchester, which contains upwards of sixty thousand souls, is not admitted to send any. Is there any principle in these things? Is there anything by which you can trace the marks of freedom or discover those of wisdom? No wonder then Mr. Burke has declined the comparison, and endeavored to lead his readers from the point by a wild unsystematical display of paradoxical rhapsodies.

The French constitution says that the national assembly shall be elected every two years. What article will Mr. Burke place against this? Why, that the nation has no right at all in the case; that the government is perfectly arbitrary with respect to this point; and he can quote for his authority the precedent of a former parliament.

The French constitution says there shall be no game laws; that the farmer on whose land wild game shall be found (for it is by the produce of those lands they are fed) shall have a right to what he can take. That there shall be no monopolies of any kind, that all trades shall be free, and every man free to follow any occupation by which he can procure an honest livelihood, and in any place, town, or city, throughout the nation. What will Mr. Burke say to this? In England game is made the property of those at whose expense it is not fed; and with respect to monopolies, the country is cut up into monopolies. Every chartered town is an aristocratic monopoly in itself, and the qualification of electors proceeds out of those chartered monopolies. Is this freedom? Is this what Mr. Burke means by a constitution?

In these chartered monopolies a man coming from another part of the country is hunted from them as if he were a foreign enemy. An Englishman is not free in his own country; every

one of those places presents a barrier in his way, and tells him he is not a freeman—that he has no rights. Within these monopolies are other monopolies. In a city, such for instance as Bath, which contains between twenty and thirty thousand inhabitants, the right of electing representatives to parliament is monopolized into about thirty-one persons. And within these monopolies are still others. A man, even of the same town, whose parents were not in circumstances to give him an occupation, is debarred in many cases from the natural right of acquiring one, be his genius or industry what it may.

Are these things examples to hold out to a country regenerating itself from slavery, like France? Certainly they are not; and certain am I that when the people of England come to reflect upon them, they will, like France, annihilate those badges of ancient oppression, those traces of a conquered nation. Had Mr. Burke possessed talents similar to the author of *On the Wealth of Nations*, he would have comprehended all the parts which enter into, and, by assemblage, form a constitution. He would have reasoned from minutiae to magnitude. It is not from his prejudices only, but from the disorderly cast of his genius, that he is unfitted for the subject he writes upon. Even his genius is without a constitution. It is a genius at random, and not a genius constituted. But he must say something. He has therefore mounted in the air like a balloon to draw the eyes of the multitude from the ground they stand upon.

Much is to be learned from the French constitution. Conquest and tyranny transplanted themselves with William the Conqueror from Normandy into England, and the country is yet disfigured with the marks. May then the example of all France contribute to regenerate the freedom which a province of it destroyed!

The French constitution says that to preserve the national representation from being corrupt no member of the national assembly shall be an officer of government, a placeman, or a pensioner. What will Mr. Burke place against this? I will whisper his answer: *loaves and fishes*. Ah! this government of *loaves and fishes* has more mischief in it than people have yet

reflected on. The national assembly has made the discovery, and holds out an example to the world. Had governments agreed to quarrel on purpose to fleece their countries by taxes, they could not have succeeded better than they have done.

Everything in the English government appears to me the reverse of what it ought to be, and of what it is said to be. The parliament, imperfectly and capriciously elected as it is, is nevertheless *supposed* to hold the national purse in *trust* for the nation; but in the manner in which an English parliament is constructed, it is like a man being both mortgager and mortgagee; and in the case of misapplication of trust, it is the criminal sitting in judgment on himself. If those persons who vote the supplies are the same persons who receive the supplies when voted, and are to account for the expenditure of those supplies to those who voted them, it is *themselves accountable to themselves*, and the Comedy of Errors concludes with the pantomime of *Hush*. Neither the ministerial party nor the opposition will touch upon this case. The national purse is the common hack which each mounts upon. It is like what the country people call, "Ride and tie—You ride a little way and then I." They order these things better in France.

The French constitution says that the right of war and peace is in the nation. Where else should it reside but in those who are to pay the expense?

In England the right is said to reside in a *metaphor*, shown at the tower for sixpence or a shilling apiece; so are the lions; and it would be a step nearer to reason to say it resided in them, for any inanimate metaphor is no more than a hat or a cap. We can all see the absurdity of worshipping Aaron's molten calf, or Nebuchadnezzar's golden image; but why do men continue to practice on themselves the absurdities they despise in others?

It may with reason be said that in the manner the English nation is represented it matters not where this right resides, whether in the crown or in the parliament. War is the common harvest of all those who participate in the division and expenditure of public money in all countries. It is the art of

*conquering at home*: the object of it is an increase of revenue; and as revenue cannot be increased without taxes, a pretense must be made for expenditures. In reviewing the history of the English government, its wars and taxes, an observer, not blinded by prejudice nor warped by interest, would declare that taxes were not raised to carry on wars, but that wars were raised to carry on taxes.

Mr. Burke, as a member of the house of commons, is a part of the English government; and though he professes himself an enemy to war, he abuses the French constitution, which seeks to explode it. He holds up the English government as a model in all its parts to France; but he should first know the remarks which the French make upon it. They contend, in favor of their own, that the portion of liberty enjoyed in England is just enough to enslave a country by, more productively than by despotism; and that as the real object of a despotism is revenue, a government so formed obtains more than it could either by direct despotism or in a full state of freedom, and is, therefore, on the ground of interest, opposed to both. They account also for the readiness which always appears in such governments for engaging in wars by remarking on the different motives which produce them. In despotic governments, wars are the effects of pride; but in those governments in which they become the means of taxation, they acquire thereby a more permanent promptitude.

The French constitution, therefore, to provide against both those evils, has taken away from kings and ministers the power of declaring war, and placed the right where the expense must fall.

When the question on the right of war and peace was agitating in the national assembly, the people of England appeared to be much interested in the event, and highly to applaud the decision. As a principle it applies as much to one country as to another. William the Conqueror, *as a conqueror*, held this power of war and peace in himself, and his descendants have ever since claimed it as a right.

Although Mr. Burke has asserted the right of the parliament

at the revolution to bind and control the nation and posterity *forever*, he denies at the same time that the parliament or the nation had any right to alter what he calls the succession of the crown, in anything but in part, or by a sort of modification. By his taking this ground he throws the case back to the *Norman Conquest*; and by thus running a line of succession, springing from William the Conqueror to the present day, he makes it necessary to inquire who and what William the Conqueror was, and where he came from; and into the origin, history, and nature of what are called prerogatives. Everything must have had a beginning, and the fog of time and of antiquity should be penetrated to discover it. Let then Mr. Burke bring forward his William of Normandy, for it is to this origin that his argument goes. It also unfortunately happens in running this line of succession, that another line, parallel thereto, presents itself, which is, that if the succession runs in a line of the conquest, the nation runs in a line of being conquered, and it ought to rescue itself from this reproach.

But it will perhaps be said that though the power of declaring war descends into the heritage of the conquest, it is held in check by the right of the parliament to withhold the supplies. It will always happen when a thing is originally wrong that amendments do not make it right, and it often happens that they do as much mischief one way as good the other: and such is the case here, for if the one rashly declares war as a matter of right, and the other peremptorily withholds the supplies as a matter of right, the remedy becomes as bad or worse than the disease. The one forces the nation to a combat, and the other ties its hands; but the more probable issue is that the contrast will end in a collusion between the parties, and be made a screen to both.

On this question of war, three things are to be considered; 1st, the right of declaring it; 2d, the expense of supporting it; 3d, the mode of conducting it after it is declared. The French constitution places the *right* where the *expense* must fall, and this union can be only in the nation. The mode of conducting it, after it is declared, it consigns to the executive department.

Were this the case in all countries, we should hear but little more of wars.

Before I proceed to consider other parts of the French constitution, and by way of relieving the fatigue of argument, I will introduce an anecdote which I had from Dr. Franklin.

While the doctor resided in France, as minister from America during the war, he had numerous proposals made to him by projectors of every country and of every kind, who wished to go to the land that floweth with milk and honey, America; and among the rest there was one who offered himself to be king. He introduced his proposal to the doctor by letter, which is now in the hands of M. Beaumarchais, of Paris—stating, first, that as the Americans had dismissed or sent away their king, they would want another. Secondly, that himself was a Norman. Thirdly, that he was of a more ancient family than the dukes of Normandy, and of a more honorable descent, his line having never been bastardized. Fourthly, that there was already a precedent in England of kings coming out of Normandy; and on these grounds he rested his offer, *enjoining* that the doctor would forward it to America. But as the doctor did not do this, nor yet send him an answer, the projector wrote a second letter; in which he did not, it is true, threaten to go over and conquer America, but only, with great dignity, proposed that if his offer was not accepted, that an acknowledgment of about £30,000 might be made to him for his generosity! Now, as all arguments respecting succession must necessarily connect that succession with some beginning, Mr. Burke's arguments on this subject go to show that there is no English origin of kings, and that they are descendants of the Norman line in right of the conquest. It may, therefore, be of service to his doctrine to make the story known, and to inform him that, in case of that natural extinction to which all mortality is subject, kings may again be had from Normandy on more reasonable terms than William the Conqueror; and, consequently, that the good people of England at the revolution of 1688 might have done much better had such a generous Norman as *this* known *their* wants, and they *his*. The chivalric character which Mr.

Burke so much admires is certainly much easier to make a bargain with than a hard-dealing Dutchman. But to return to the matters of the constitution.

The French constitution says *there shall be no titles*; and of consequence all that class of equivocal generation which in some countries is called "*aristocracy*," and in others "*nobility*," is done away, and the *peer* is exalted into the *man*.

Titles are but nicknames, and every nickname is a title. The thing is perfectly harmless in itself, but it marks a sort of foppery in the human character which degrades it. It renders man diminutive in things which are great, and the counterfeit of woman in things which are little. It talks about its fine *riband* like a girl, and shows its *garter* like a child. A certain writer, of some antiquity, says, "When I was a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things."

It is, properly, from the elevated mind of France that the folly of titles has been abolished. It has outgrown the baby-clothes of *count* and *duke*, and breeched itself in manhood. France has not levelled, it has exalted. It has put down the dwarf to set up the man. The insignificance of a senseless word like *duke*, *count*, or *earl*, has ceased to please. Even those who possessed them have disowned the gibberish and, as they outgrew the rickets, have despised the rattle. The genuine mind of man, thirsting for its native home, society, contemns the gewgaws that separate him from it. Titles are like circles drawn by the magician's wand to contract the sphere of man's felicity. He lives immured within the Bastile of a word, and surveys at a distance the envied life of man.

Is it then any wonder that titles should fall in France? Is it not a greater wonder they should be kept up anywhere? What are they? What is their worth, nay "what is their amount?" When we think or speak of a *judge*, or a *general*, we associate with it the ideas of office and character; we think of gravity in the one, and bravery in the other; but when we use a word merely as a title, no ideas associate with it. Through all the vocabulary of Adam, there is not such an animal as a

duke or a count; neither can we connect any certain idea to the words. Whether they mean strength or weakness, wisdom or folly, a child or a man, or a rider or a horse, is all equivocal. What respect then can be paid to that which describes nothing, and which means nothing? Imagination has given figure and character to centaurs, satyrs, and down to all the fairy tribe; but titles baffle even the powers of fancy, and are a chimerical nondescript.

But this is not all. If a whole country is disposed to hold them in contempt, all their value is gone, and none will own them. It is common opinion only that makes them anything or nothing, or worse than nothing. There is no occasion to take titles away, for they take themselves away when society concurs to ridicule them. This species of imaginary consequence has visibly declined in every part of Europe, and it hastens to its exit as the world of reason continues to rise. There was a time when the lowest class of what are called nobility was more thought of than the highest is now, and when a man in armor riding through Christendom in search of adventures was more stared at than a modern duke. The world has seen this folly fall, and it has fallen by being laughed at, and the farce of titles will follow its fate. The patriots of France have discovered in good time that rank and dignity in society must take a new ground. The old one has fallen through. It must now take the substantial ground of character instead of the chimerical ground of titles; and they have brought their titles to the altar, and made of them a burnt offering to reason.

If no mischief had annexed itself to the folly of titles, they would not have been worth a serious and formal destruction, such as the national assembly have decreed them; and this makes it necessary to inquire further into the nature and character of aristocracy.

That, then, which is called aristocracy in some countries, and nobility in others, arose out of the governments founded upon conquest. It was originally a military order for the purpose of supporting military government (for such were all

governments founded in conquests); and to keep up a succession of this order for the purpose for which it was established, all the younger branches of those families were disinherited, and the law of *primogenitureship* set up.

The nature and character of aristocracy shows itself to us in this law. It is a law against every law of nature, and nature herself calls for its destruction. Establish family justice and aristocracy falls. By the aristocratical law of *primogenitureship*, in a family of six children, five are exposed. Aristocracy has never but *one* child. The rest are begotten to be devoured. They are thrown to the cannibal for prey, and the natural parent prepares the unnatural repast.

As everything which is out of nature in man affects, more or less, the interest of society, so does this. All the children which the aristocracy disowns (which are all, except the eldest) are, in general, cast like orphans on a parish, to be provided for by the public, but at a greater charge. Unnecessary offices and places in governments and courts are created at the expense of the public to maintain them.

With what kind of parental reflections can the father or mother contemplate their younger offspring. By nature they are children, and by marriage they are heirs; but by aristocracy they are bastards and orphans. They are the flesh and blood of their parents in one line, and nothing akin to them in the other. To restore, therefore, parents to their children, and children to their parents—relations to each other, and man to society—and to exterminate the monster aristocracy, root and branch—the French constitution has destroyed the law of *primogenitureship*. Here then lies the monster, and Mr. Burke, if he pleases, may write its epitaph.

Hitherto we have considered aristocracy chiefly in one point of view. We have now to consider it in another. But whether we view it before or behind, or sideways, or any way else, domestically or publicly, it is still a monster.

In France aristocracy had one feature less in its countenance than what it has in some other countries. It did not compose a body of hereditary legislators. It was not "*a corporation of*

*aristocracy*," for such I have heard M. de la Fayette describe an English house of peers. Let us then examine the grounds upon which the French constitution has resolved against having such a house in France.

Because, in the first place, as is already mentioned, aristocracy is kept up by family tyranny and injustice.

2nd, Because there is an unnatural unfitness in an aristocracy to be legislators for a nation. Their ideas of *distributive justice* are corrupted at the very source. They begin life trampling on all their younger brothers and sisters, and relations of every kind, and are taught and educated so to do. With what ideas of justice or honor can that man enter a house of legislation, who absorbs in his own person the inheritance of a whole family of children, or metes out some pitiful portion with the insolence of a gift?

3d, Because the idea of hereditary legislators is as inconsistent as that of hereditary judges, or hereditary juries; and as absurd as an hereditary mathematician, or an hereditary wise man; and as ridiculous as an hereditary poet laureate.

4th, Because a body of men, holding themselves accountable to nobody, ought not to be trusted by anybody.

5th, Because it is continuing the uncivilized principle of governments founded in conquest, and the base idea of man having property in man and governing him by personal right.

6th, Because aristocracy has a tendency to degenerate the human species. By the universal economy of nature it is known, and by the instance of the Jews it is proved, that the human species has a tendency to degenerate, in any small number of persons, when separated from the general stock of society, and intermarrying constantly with each other. It defeats even its pretended end, and becomes in time the opposite of what is noble in man. Mr. Burke talks of nobility; let him show what it is. The greatest characters the world has known have rose on the democratic floor. Aristocracy has not been able to keep a proportionate pace with democracy. The artificial *noble* shrinks into a dwarf before the *noble* of nature; and in the few instances (for there are some in all countries) in whom nature,

as by a miracle, has survived in aristocracy, *those men despise it*. But it is time to proceed to a new subject.

The French constitution has reformed the condition of the clergy. It has raised the income of the lower and middle classes, and taken from the higher. None are now less than twelve hundred livres (fifty pounds sterling), nor any higher than two or three thousand pounds. What will Mr. Burke place against this? Hear what he says.

He says that "the people of England can see, without pain or grudging, an archbishop precede a duke; they can see a bishop of Durham, or a bishop of Winchester, in possession of £10,000 a year; and cannot see why it is in worse hands than estates to the like amount in the hands of this earl or that 'squire." And Mr. Burke offers this as an example to France.

As to the first part, whether the archbishop precedes the duke, or the duke the bishop, it is, I believe, to the people in general, somewhat like *Sternhold and Hopkins*, or *Hopkins and Sternhold*; you may put which you please first: and as I confess that I do not understand the merits of this case, I will not contend it with Mr. Burke.

But with respect to the latter, I have something to say. Mr. Burke has not put the case right. The comparison is out of order by being put between the bishop and the earl or the 'squire. It ought to be put between the bishop and the curate, and then it will stand thus: *the people of England can see without grudging or pain, a bishop of Durham or a bishop of Winchester, in possession of ten thousand pounds a year, and a curate on thirty or forty pounds a year, or less*. No, sir, they certainly do not see these things without great pain and grudging. It is a case that applies itself to every man's sense of justice, and is one among many that calls aloud for a constitution.

In France the cry of "*the church! the church!*" was repeated as often as in Mr. Burke's book, and as loudly as when the dissenters' bill was before parliament; but the generality of the French clergy were not to be deceived by this cry any longer. They knew that whatever the pretense might be, it was themselves who were one of the principal objects of it. It was the

cry of the high beneficed clergy to prevent any regulation of income taking place between those of ten thousand pounds a year and the parish priest. They, therefore, joined their case to those of every other oppressed class of men, and by this union obtained redress.

The French constitution has abolished tithes, that source of perpetual discontent between the tithe-holder and the parishioner. When land is held on tithe, it is in the condition of an estate held between two parties; one receiving one tenth, and the other nine tenths of the produce; and, consequently, on principles of equity, if the estate can be improved and made to produce by that improvement double or treble what it did before, or in any other ratio, the expense of such improvement ought to be borne in like proportion between the parties who are to share the produce. But this is not the case in tithes; the farmer bears the whole expense, and the tithe-holder takes a tenth of the improvement, in addition to the original tenth, and by this means gets the value of two tenths instead of one. This is another case that calls for a constitution.

The French constitution hath abolished or renounced *toleration*, and *intoleration* also, and hath established *universal right of conscience*.

• Toleration is not the *opposite* of intoleration, but is the *counterfeit* of it. Both are despotisms. The one assumes to itself the right of withholding liberty of conscience, and the other of granting it. The one is the pope, armed with fire and faggot, and the other is the pope selling or granting indulgences. The former is church and state, and the latter is church and traffic.

But toleration may be viewed in a much stronger light. Man worships not himself, but his maker; and the liberty of conscience which he claims is not for the service of himself, but of his God. In this case, therefore, we must necessarily have the associated idea of two beings; the *mortal* who renders the worship, and the *immortal being* who is worshipped. Toleration therefore places itself not between man and man, nor between church and church, nor between one denomination of

religion and another, but between God and man; between the being who worships, and the *being* who is worshipped; and by the same act of assumed authority by which it tolerates man to pay his worship, it presumptuously and blasphemously sets up itself to tolerate the Almighty to receive it.

Were a bill brought into parliament, entitled, "An *act* to tolerate or grant liberty to the Almighty to receive the worship of a Jew or a Turk," or "to prohibit the Almighty from receiving it," all men would startle, and call it blasphemy. There would be an uproar. The presumption of toleration in religious matters would then present itself unmasked; but the presumption is not the less because the name of "man" only appears to those laws, for the associated idea of the *worshipper* and the *worshipped* cannot be separated. Who, then, art thou, vain dust and ashes! by whatever name thou art called, whether a king, a bishop, a church or a state, a parliament or anything else, that obtrudest thine insignificance between the soul of man and his maker? Mind thine own concerns. If he believes not as thou believest, it is a proof that thou believest not as he believeth, and there is no earthly power can determine between you.

With respect to what are called denominations of religion, if everyone is left to judge of his own religion, there is no such thing as a religion that is wrong; but if they are to judge of each other's religion, there is no such thing as a religion that is right; and therefore all the world is right, or all the world is wrong. But with respect to religion itself, without regard to names, and as directing itself from the universal family of mankind to the divine object of all adoration, *it is man bringing to his maker the fruits of his heart*; and though these fruits may differ from each other like the fruits of the earth, the grateful tribute of everyone is accepted.

A bishop of Durham, or a bishop of Winchester, or the archbishop who heads the dukes, will not refuse a tithe-sheaf of wheat, because it is not a cock of hay; nor a cock of hay, because it is not a sheaf of wheat; nor a pig because it is neither the one nor the other: but these same persons, under the figure

of an established church, will not permit their maker to receive the varied tithes of man's devotion.

One of the continual choruses of Mr. Burke's book is "church and state"; he does not mean some one particular church, or some one particular state, but any church and state; and he uses the term as a general figure to hold forth the political doctrine of always uniting the church with the state in every country, and he censures the national assembly for not having done this in France. Let us bestow a few thoughts on this subject.

All religions are in their nature mild and benign, and united with principles of morality. They could not have made proselytes at first by professing anything that was vicious, cruel, persecuting, or immoral. Like everything else, they had their beginning; and they proceeded by persuasion, exhortation, and example. How then is it that they lose their native mildness, and become morose and intolerant?

It proceeds from the connection which Mr. Burke recommends. By engendering the church with the state, a sort of mule animal, capable only of destroying and not of breeding up, is produced, called *the church established by law*. It is a stranger, even from its birth, to any parent mother on which it is begotten, and whom in time it kicks out and destroys.

The inquisition in Spain does not proceed from the religion originally professed, but from this mule animal, engendered between the church and the state. The burnings in Smithfield proceeded from the same heterogeneous production; and it was regeneration of this strange animal in England afterwards that renewed rancor and irreligion among the inhabitants, and that drove the people called Quakers and Dissenters to America. Persecution is not an original feature in *any* religion; but it is always the strongly-marked feature of all law-religions, or religions established by law. Take away the law-establishment, and every religion reassumes its original benignity. In America, a catholic priest is a good citizen, a good character, and a good neighbor; an episcopalian minister is of the same description: and this proceeds, independent of men, from there being no law-establishment in America.

If also we view this matter in a temporal sense, we shall see the ill effects it has had on the prosperity of nations. The union of church and state has impoverished Spain. The revoking the edict of Nantz drove the silk manufacture from that country into England; and church and state are now driving the cotton manufacture from England to America and France. Let then Mr. Burke continue to preach his antipolitical doctrine of church and state. It will do some good. The national assembly will not follow his advice, but will benefit by his folly. It was by observing the ill effects of it in England, that America has been warned against it; and it is by experiencing them in France, that the national assembly have abolished it, and, like America, has established *universal right of conscience, and universal right of citizenship*.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>When in any country we see extraordinary circumstances taking place, they naturally lead any man who has a talent for observation and investigation to inquire into the causes. The manufacturers of Manchester, Birmingham, and Sheffield are the principal manufacturers in England. From whence did this arise? A little observation will explain the case. The principal, and the generality of the inhabitants of those places, are not of what is called in England the church established by law: and they, or their fathers (for it is within but a few years) withdrew from the persecution of the chartered towns, where test-laws more particularly operate, and established a sort of asylum for themselves in those places. It was the only asylum then offered, for the rest of Europe was worse. But the case is now changing. France and America bid all comers welcome, and initiate them into all the rights of citizenship. Policy and interest, therefore, will, but perhaps too late, dictate in England what reason and justice could not. Those manufacturers are withdrawing to other places. There is now erecting in Passey, three miles from Paris, a large cotton manufactory, and several are already erected in America. Soon after the rejecting the bill for repealing the test-law, one of the richest manufacturers in England said in my hearing, "England, sir, is not a country for a Dissenter to live in,—we must go to France." These are truths, and it is doing justice to both parties to tell them. It is chiefly the Dissenters that have carried English manufactures to the height they are now at, and the same men have it in their power to carry them away; and though those manufactures would afterwards continue in those places, the foreign market will be lost. There frequently appears in the London Gazette extracts from certain acts to prevent machines, and as far as it can extend to persons, from going

I will here cease the comparison with respect to the principles of the French constitution, and conclude this part of the subject with a few observations on the organization of the formal parts of the French and English governments.

The executive power in each country is in the hands of a person styled the king; but the French constitution distinguishes between the king and the sovereign: it considers the station of king as official, and places sovereignty in the nation.

The representatives of the nation, which compose the national assembly and who are the legislative power, originate in and from the people by election, as an inherent right in the people. In England it is otherwise; and this arises from the original establishment of what is called its monarchy; for as by the conquest all the rights of the people or the nation were absorbed into the hands of the conqueror, and who added the title of king to that of conqueror, those same matters which in France are now held as rights in the people, or in the nation, are held in England as grants from what is called the crown. The parliament in England, in both its branches, was erected by patents from the descendants of the conqueror. The house of commons did not originate as a matter of right in the people, to delegate or elect, but as a grant or boon.

By the French constitution the nation is always named before the king. The third article of the declaration of rights says, "*The nation is essentially the source (or fountain) of all sovereignty.*" Mr. Burke argues that in England a king is the fountain—that he is the fountain of all honor. But as this idea is evidently descended from the conquest, I shall make no other remark upon it than that it is the nature of conquest to turn everything upside down; and as Mr. Burke will not be refused

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out of the country. It appears from these that the ill effects of the test-laws and church-establishment begin to be much suspected; but the remedy of force can never supply the remedy of reason. In the progress of less than a century, all the unrepresented part of England, of all denominations which is at least an hundred times the most numerous, may begin to feel the necessity of a constitution, and then all those matters will come regularly before them. [Paine's note.]

the privilege of speaking twice, and as there are but two parts in the figure, the *fountain* and the *spout*, he will be right the second time.

The French constitution puts the legislative before the executive; the law before the king; *la loi, le roi*. This also is in the natural order of things; because laws must have existence before they can have execution.

A king in France does not, in addressing himself to the national assembly, say "my assembly," similar to the phrase used in England of "*my parliament*"; neither can he use it consistent with the constitution, nor could it be admitted. There may be propriety in the use of it in England, because, as is before mentioned, both houses of parliament originated out of what is called the crown, by patent or boon—and not out of the inherent rights of the people as the national assembly does in France, and whose name designates its origin.

The president of the national assembly does not ask the king *to grant to the assembly the liberty of speech*, as is the case with the English house of commons. The constitutional dignity of the national assembly cannot debase itself. Speech is, in the first place, one of the natural rights of man, always retained; and with respect to the national assembly, the use of it is their *duty*, and the nation is their *authority*. They were elected by the greatest body of men exercising the right of election the European world ever saw. They sprung not from the filth of rotten boroughs, nor are they vassal representatives of aristocratical ones. Feeling the proper dignity of their character, they support it. Their parliamentary language, whether for or against a question, is free, bold, and manly, and extends to all the parts and circumstances of the case. If any matter or subject respecting the executive department or the person who presides in it (the king) comes before them, it is debated on with the spirit of men and the language of gentlemen; and their answer, or their address, is returned in the same style. They stand not aloft with the gaping vacuity of vulgar ignorance, nor bend with the cringe of sycophantic insignificance. The graceful pride of truth knows no extremes, and

kept up. They are in the condition of men who get their living by show, and to whom the folly of that show is so familiar that they ridicule it; but were the audience to be made as wise in this respect as themselves, there would be an end to the show and the profits with it. The difference between a republican and a courtier with respect to monarchy is that the one opposes monarchy believing it to be something, and the other laughs at it knowing it to be nothing.

As I used sometimes to correspond with Mr. Burke, believing him then to be a man of sounder principles than his book shows him to be, I wrote to him last winter from Paris and gave him an account how prosperously matters were going on. Among other subjects in that letter, I referred to the happy situation the national assembly were placed in; that they had taken a ground on which their moral duty and their political interest were united. They have not to hold out a language which they do not believe, for the fraudulent purpose of making others believe it. Their station requires no artifice to support it, and can only be maintained by enlightening mankind. It is not their interest to cherish ignorance, but to dispel it. They are not in the case of a ministerial or an opposition party in England, who, though they are opposed, are still united to keep up the common mystery. The national assembly must throw open a magazine of light. It must show man the proper character of man; and the nearer it can bring him to that standard, the stronger the national assembly becomes.

In contemplating the French constitution, we see in it a rational order of things. The principles harmonize with the forms, and both with their origin. It may perhaps be said as an excuse for bad forms, that they are nothing more than forms; but this is a mistake. Forms grow out of principles, and operate to continue the principles they grow from. It is impossible to practice a bad form on anything but a bad principle. It cannot be ingrafted on a good one; and wherever the forms in any government are bad, it is a certain indication that the principles are bad also.

I will here finally close this subject. I began it by remarking

that Mr. Burke had *voluntarily* declined going into a comparison of the English and French constitutions. He apologizes for not doing it by saying that he had not time. Mr. Burke's book was upwards of eight months in hand, and it extended to a volume of three hundred and fifty-six pages. As his omission does injury to his cause, his apology makes it worse; and men on the English side of the water will begin to consider whether there is not some radical defect in what is called the English constitution that made it necessary in Mr. Burke to suppress the comparison, to avoid bringing it into view.

#### [STEPS LEADING TO THE REVOLUTION]

As Mr. Burke has not written on constitutions, so neither has he written on the French revolution. He gives no account of its commencement or its progress. He only expresses his wonder. "It looks," says he, "to me as if I were in a great crisis, not of the affairs of France alone, but of all Europe, perhaps of more than Europe. All circumstances taken together, the French revolution is the most astonishing that has hitherto happened in the world."

As wise men are astonished at foolish things, and other people at wise ones, I know not on which ground to account for Mr. Burke's astonishment; but certain it is that he does not understand the French revolution. It has apparently burst forth like a creation from a chaos, but it is no more than the consequence of mental revolution previously existing in France. The mind of the nation had changed beforehand, and a new order of things has naturally followed a new order of thoughts. I will here, as concisely as I can, trace out the growth of the French revolution, and mark the circumstances that have contributed to produce it.

The despotism of Louis XIV, united with the gaiety of his court and the gaudy ostentation of his character, had so humbled, and at the same time so fascinated the mind of France, that the people appear to have lost all sense of their own dignity in contemplating that of their grand monarch; and the whole

reign of Louis XV, remarkable only for weakness and effeminacy, made no other alteration than that of spreading a sort of lethargy over the nation, from which it showed no disposition to rise.

The only signs which appeared of the spirit of liberty during those periods are to be found in the writings of the French philosophers. Montesquieu, president of the parliament of Bordeaux, went as far as a writer under a despotic government could well proceed; and being obliged to divide himself between principle and prudence, his mind often appears under a veil, and we ought to give him credit for more than he has expressed.

Voltaire, who was both the flatterer and satirist of despotism, took another line. His forte lay in exposing and ridiculing the superstitions which priestcraft, united with statecraft, had interwoven with governments. It was not from the purity of his principles, or his love of mankind (for satire and philanthropy are not naturally concordant), but from his strong capacity of seeing folly in its true shape and his irresistible propensity to expose it, that he made those attacks. They were however as formidable as if the motives had been virtuous; and he merits the thanks rather than the esteem of mankind.

On the contrary we find in the writings of Rousseau and Abbé Raynal a loveliness of sentiment in favor of liberty that excites respect and elevates the human faculties; yet having raised this animation, they do not direct its operations, but leave the mind in love with an object, without describing the means of possessing it.

The writings of Quisne, Turgot, and the friends of those authors are of a serious kind; but they labored under the same disadvantage with Montesquieu; their writings abound with moral maxims of government, but are rather directed to economize and reform the administration of the government than the government itself.

But all those writings and many others had their weight; and by the different manner in which they treated the subject of government—Montesquieu by his judgment and knowledge of laws, Voltaire by his wit, Rousseau and Raynal by their anima-

tion, and Quisne and Turgot by their moral maxims and systems of economy—readers of every class met with something to their taste, and a spirit of political inquiry began to diffuse itself through the nation at the time the dispute between England and the then colonies of America broke out.

In the war which France afterwards engaged in, it is very well known that the nation appeared to be beforehand with the French ministry. Each of them had its views; but those views were directed to different objects; the one sought liberty and the other retaliation on England. The French officers and soldiers who after this went to America were eventually placed in the school of freedom, and learned the practice as well as the principles of it by heart.

As it was impossible to separate the military events which took place in America from the principles of the American revolution, the publication of those events in France necessarily connected themselves with the principles that produced them. Many of the facts were in themselves principles; such as the declaration of American Independence, and the treaty of alliance between France and America, which recognized the natural rights of man and justified resistance to oppression.

The then minister of France, Count Vergennes, was not the friend of America; and it is both justice and gratitude to say that it was the queen of France who gave the cause of America a fashion at the French court. Count Vergennes was the personal and social friend of Dr. Franklin; and the doctor had obtained by his sensible gracefulness a sort of influence over him; but with respect to principles, Count Vergennes was a despot.

The situation of Dr. Franklin as minister from America to France should be taken into the chain of circumstances. A diplomatic character is the narrowest sphere of society that man can act in. It forbids intercourse by a reciprocity of suspicion; and a diplomatist is a sort of unconnected atom, continually repelling and repelled. But this was not the case with Dr. Franklin; he was not the diplomatist of a court, but of *man*.

His character as a philosopher had been long established, and his circle of society in France was universal.

Count Vergennes resisted for a considerable time the publication of the American constitutions in France, translated into the French language; but even in this he was obliged to give way to public opinion, and a sort of propriety in admitting to appear what he had undertaken to defend. The American constitutions were to liberty what a grammar is to language: they define its parts of speech, and practically construct them into syntax.

The peculiar situation of the then Marquis de la Fayette is another link in the great chain. He served in America as an American officer, under a commission of congress, and by the universality of his acquaintance was in close friendship with the civil government of America as well as with the military line. He spoke the language of the country, entered into the discussions on the principles of government, and was always a welcome friend at any election.

When the war closed, a vast reinforcement to the cause of liberty spread itself over France, by the return of the French officers and soldiers. A knowledge of the practice was then joined to the theory; and all that was wanting to give it real existence was opportunity. Man cannot, properly speaking, make circumstances for his purpose, but he always has it in his power to improve them when they occur; and this was the case in France.

M. Neckar was displaced in May, 1781; and by the ill management of the finances afterwards, and particularly during the extravagant administration of M. Calonne, the revenue of France which was nearly twenty-four millions sterling per year, was become unequal to the expenditures, not because the revenue had decreased, but because the expenses had increased, and this was the circumstance which the nation laid hold of to bring forward a revolution. The English minister, Mr. Pitt, has frequently alluded to the state of the French finances in his budgets, without understanding the subject. Had the French parliaments been as ready to register edicts for new taxes as an

English parliament is to grant them, there had been no derangement in the finances, nor yet any revolution; but this will better explain itself as I proceed.

It will be necessary here to show how taxes were formerly raised in France. The king, or rather the court or ministry, acting under the use of that name, framed the edicts for taxes at their own discretion and sent them to the parliaments to be registered; for until they were registered by the parliaments, they were not operative. Disputes had long existed between the court and the parliament with respect to the extent of the parliament's authority on this head. The court insisted that the authority of parliament went no farther than to remonstrate or show reasons against the tax, reserving to itself the right of determining whether the reasons were well- or ill-founded; and in consequence thereof, either to withdraw the edict as a matter of choice, or to order it to be registered as a matter of authority. The parliaments on their part insisted that they had not only a right to remonstrate, but to reject; and on this ground they were always supported by the nation.

But to return to the order of my narrative. M. Calonne wanted money; and as he knew the sturdy disposition of the parliaments with respect to new taxes, he ingeniously sought either to approach them by a more gentle means than that of direct authority, or to get over their heads by a *manceuvre*: and for this purpose he revived the project of assembling a body of men from the several provinces, under the style of an "assembly of the notables," or men of note, who met in 1787, and were either to recommend taxes to the parliaments or to act as a parliament themselves. An assembly under this name had been called in 1687.

As we are to view this as the first practical step towards the revolution, it will be proper to enter into some particulars respecting it. The assembly of the notables has in some places been mistaken for the states-general, but was wholly a different body; the states-general being always by election. The persons who composed the assembly of the notables were all nominated by the king, and consisted of one hundred and forty mem-

bers. But as M. Calonne could not depend upon a majority of this assembly in his favor, he very ingeniously arranged them in such a manner as to make forty-four a majority of one hundred and forty: to effect this, he disposed of them into seven separate committees, of twenty members each. Every general question was to be decided, not by a majority of persons, but by a majority of committees; and as eleven votes would make a majority in a committee, and four committees a majority of seven, M. Calonne had good reason to conclude, that as forty-four would determine any general question, he could not be outvoted. But all his plans deceived him, and in the event became his overthrow.

The then Marquis de la Fayette was placed in the second committee, of which Count d'Artois was president; and as money matters was the object, it naturally brought into view every circumstance connected with it. M. de la Fayette made a verbal charge against Calonne for selling crown land to the amount of two millions of livres, in a manner that appeared to be unknown to the king. The Count d'Artois (as if to intimidate, for the Bastille was then in being) asked the marquis if he would render the charge in writing. He replied that he would. The Count d'Artois did not demand it, but brought a message from the king to that purport. M. de la Fayette then delivered in his charge in writing to be given to the king, undertaking to support it. No further proceedings were had upon this affair; but M. Calonne was soon after dismissed by the king, and went to England.

As M. de la Fayette, from the experience he had had in America, was better acquainted with the science of civil government than the generality of the members who composed the assembly of the notables could then be, the brunt of the business fell considerably to his share. The plan of those who had a constitution in view was to contend with the court on the ground of taxes, and some of them openly professed their object. Disputes frequently arose between Count d'Artois and M. de la Fayette upon various subjects. With respect to the arrears already incurred, the latter proposed to remedy them by

accommodating the expenses to the revenue, instead of the revenue to the expenses; and as objects of reform, he proposed to abolish the Bastile and all the state prisons throughout the nation (the keeping of which was attended with great expense), and to suppress *lettres de cachet*; but those matters were not then much attended to; and with respect to *lettres de cachet*, a majority of the nobles appeared to be in favor of them.

On the subject of supplying the treasury by new taxes, the assembly declined taking the matter on themselves, concurring in the opinion that they had not authority. In a debate on the subject, M. de la Fayette said that raising money by taxes could only be done by a national assembly, freely elected by the people and acting as their representatives. Do you mean, said the Count d'Artois, the states-general? M. de la Fayette replied that he did. Will you, said the Count d'Artois, sign what you say, to be given to the king? The other replied that he not only would do this, but that he would go further, and say that the effectual mode would be for the king to agree to the establishment of a constitution.

As one of the plans had thus failed, that of getting the assembly to act as a parliament, the other came into view, that of recommending. On this subject the assembly agreed to recommend two new taxes to be enregistered by the parliament, the one a stamp act, and the other a territorial tax, or sort of land tax. The two have been estimated at about five millions sterling per annum. We have now to turn our attention to the parliaments, on whom the business was again devolving.

The archbishop of Toulouse (since archbishop of Sens, and now a cardinal) was appointed to the administration of the finances soon after the dismissal of Calonne. He was also made prime minister, an office that did not always exist in France. When this office did not exist the chief of each of the principal departments transacted business immediately with the king; but when a prime minister was appointed, they did business only with him. The archbishop arrived to more state-authority than any minister since the Duke de Choiseuil, and the nation was strongly disposed in his favor; but by a line of

conduct scarcely to be accounted for, he perverted every opportunity, turned out a despot, and sunk into disgrace, and a cardinal.

The assembly of the notables having broke up, the new minister sent the edicts for the two new taxes recommended by the assembly to the parliaments, to be enregistered. They of course came first before the parliament of Paris, who returned for answer, *That with such a revenue as the nation then supported, the name of taxes ought not to be mentioned but for the purpose of reducing them;* and threw both the edicts out.<sup>1</sup>

On this refusal, the parliament was ordered to Versailles, where in the usual form the king held what under the old government was called a bed of justice; and the two edicts were enregistered in presence of the parliament, by an order of state, in the manner mentioned. On this, the parliament immediately returned to Paris, renewed their session in form, and ordered the enregistering to be struck out, declaring that everything done at Versailles was illegal. All the members of parliament were then served with *lettres de cachet*, and exiled to Trois; but as they continued as inflexible in exile as before, and as vengeance did not supply the place of taxes, they were after a short time recalled to Paris.

The edicts were again tendered to them, and the Count d'Artois undertook to act as representative for the king. For this purpose he came from Versailles to Paris, in a train of procession; and the parliament was assembled to receive him. But show and parade had lost their influence in France; and whatever ideas of importance he might set off with, he had to return with those of mortification and disappointment. On alighting from his carriage to ascend the steps of the parliament house, the crowd (which was numerous collected) threw out trite expressions, saying, "This is Monsieur d'Artois, who wants more of our money to spend." The marked disapprobation which he saw impressed him with apprehensions; and the word

<sup>1</sup>When the English minister, Mr. Pitt, mentions the French finances again in the English parliament, it would be well that he noticed this as an example. [Paine's note.]

*aux armes (to arms)* was given out by the officer of the guard who attended him. It was so loudly vociferated that it echoed through the avenues of the house, and produced a temporary confusion: I was then standing in one of the apartments through which he had to pass, and could not avoid reflecting how wretched is the condition of a disrespected man.

He endeavored to impress the parliament by great words, and opened his authority by saying, "The king, our lord and master." The parliament received him very coolly and with their usual determination not to register the taxes; and in this manner the interview ended.

After this a new subject took place: in the various debates and contests that arose between the court and the parliaments on the subject of taxes, the parliament of Paris at last declared that although it had been customary for parliaments to enregister edicts for taxes as a matter of convenience, the right belonged only to the states-general; and that, therefore, the parliament could no longer with propriety continue to debate on what it had not authority to act. The king, after this, came to Paris and held a meeting with the parliament, in which he continued from ten in the morning till about six in the evening; and in a manner that appeared to proceed from him, as if unconsulted upon with the cabinet or the ministry, gave his word to the parliament that the states-general should be convened.

But after this another scene arose, on a ground different from all the former. The minister and the cabinet were averse to calling the states-general; they well knew, that if the states-general were assembled, that themselves must fall; and as the king had not mentioned *any time*, they hit on a project calculated to elude, without appearing to oppose.

For this purpose the court set about making a sort of constitution itself; it was principally the work of M. Lamoignon, keeper of the seals, who afterwards shot himself. The arrangement consisted in establishing a body under the name of a *cour plénière*, or full court, in which were invested all the power that the government might have occasion to make use of. The persons composing this court to be nominated by the king;

the contended right of taxation was given up on the part of the king, and a new criminal code of laws, and law proceedings, was substituted in the room of the former. The thing, in many points, contained better principles than those upon which the government had hitherto been administered; but, with respect to the *cour plénière*, it was no other than a medium through which despotism was to pass without appearing to act directly from itself.

The cabinet had high expectations from their new contrivance. The persons who were to compose the *cour plénière* were already nominated; and as it was necessary to carry a fair appearance, many of the best characters in the nation were appointed among the number. It was to commence on the 8th of May, 1788: but an opposition arose to it on two grounds—the one as to principle, the other as to form.

On the ground of principle, it was contended that government had not a right to alter itself; and that if the practice was once admitted, it would grow into a principle and be made a precedent for any future alterations the government might wish to establish; that the right of altering the government was a national right, and not a right of government. And on the ground of form, it was contended that the *cour plénière* was nothing more than a large cabinet.

The then Dukes de la Rochefoucault, Luxembourg, de Noailles, and many others, refused to accept the nomination, and strenuously opposed the whole plan. When the edict for establishing this new court was sent to the parliaments to be enregistered and put into execution, they resisted also. The parliament of Paris not only refused, but denied the authority; and the contest renewed itself between the parliament and the cabinet more strongly than ever. While the parliament was sitting in debate on this subject, the ministry ordered a regiment of soldiers to surround the house and form a blockade. The members sent out for beds and provision, and lived as in a besieged citadel; and as this had no effect, the commanding officer was ordered to enter the parliament house and seize them, which he did, and some of the principal members were

shut up in different prisons. About the same time a deputation of persons arrived from the province of Brittany to remonstrate against the establishment of the *cour plénière*; and those the archbishop sent to the Bastile. But the spirit of the nation was not to be overcome; and it was so fully sensible of the strong ground it had taken, that of withholding taxes, that it contented itself with keeping up a sort of quiet resistance which effectually overthrew all the plans at that time formed against it. The project of the *cour plénière* was at last obliged to be given up, and the prime minister not long afterwards followed its fate; and M. Neckar was recalled into office.

The attempt to establish the *cour plénière* had an effect upon the nation which was not anticipated. It was a sort of new form of government that insensibly served to put the old one out of sight and to unhinge it from the superstitious authority of antiquity. It was government dethroning government; and the old one, by attempting to make a new one, made a chasm.

The failure of this scheme renewed the subject of convening the states-general: and this gave rise to a new series of politics. There was no settled form for convening the states-general; all that it positively meant was a deputation from what was then called the clergy, the nobility, and the commons; but their numbers, or their proportions, had not been always the same. They had been convened only on extraordinary occasions, the last of which was in 1614; their numbers were then in equal proportions, and they voted by orders.

It could not well escape the sagacity of M. Neckar that the mode of 1614 would answer neither the purpose of the then government, nor of the nation. As matters were at that time circumstanced, it would have been too contentious to argue upon anything. The debates would have been endless upon privileges and exemptions, in which neither the wants of the government nor the wishes of the nation for a constitution would have been attended to. But as he did not choose to take the decision upon himself, he summoned again the assembly of the *notables*, and referred it to them. This body was in general interested in the decision, being chiefly of the aristocracy and

the high paid clergy; and they decided in favor of the mode of 1614. This decision was against the sense of the nation and also against the wishes of the court; for the aristocracy opposed itself to both and contended for privileges independent of either. The subject was then taken up by the parliament, who recommended that the number of the commons should be equal to the other two; and that they should all sit in one house, and vote in one body. The number finally determined on was twelve hundred: six hundred to be chosen by the commons (and this was less than their proportion ought to have been when their worth and consequence is considered on a national scale), three hundred by the clergy, and three hundred by the aristocracy; but with respect to the mode of assembling themselves, whether together or apart, or the manner in which they should vote, those matters were referred.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Mr. Burke (and I must take the liberty of telling him that he is unacquainted with French affairs), speaking upon this subject, says, "The first thing that struck me in calling the states-general, was a great departure from the ancient course;" and he soon after says, "From the moment I read the list, I saw distinctly, and very nearly as it has happened, all that was to follow." Mr. Burke certainly did not see all that was to follow. I have endeavored to impress him, as well before as after the states-general met, that there would be a *revolution*; but was not able to make him see it, neither would he believe it. How then he could distinctly see all the parts, when the whole was out of sight, is beyond my comprehension. And with respect to the "departure from the ancient course," besides the natural weakness of the remark, it shows that he is unacquainted with circumstances. The departure was necessary, from the experience had upon it, that the ancient course was a bad one. The states-general of 1614 were called at the commencement of the civil war in the minority of Louis XIII; but by the clash of arranging them by orders, they increased the confusion they were called to compose. The author of *l'Intrigue du Cabinet* (Vol. I, p. 329), who wrote before any revolution was thought of in France, speaking of the states-general of 1614, says, "They held the public in suspense five months; and by the questions agitated therein, and the heat with which they were put, it appears that the great (*les grands*) thought more to satisfy their particular passions than to procure the good of the nation; and the whole time passed away in altercations, ceremonies and parade." [Paine's note.]

The election that followed was not a contested election, but an animated one. The candidates were not men, but principles. Societies were formed in Paris, and committees of correspondence and communication established throughout the nation, for the purpose of enlightening the people and explaining to them the principles of civil government; and so orderly was the election conducted that it did not give rise even to the rumor of tumult.

The states-general were to meet at Versailles in April, 1789, but did not assemble till May. They located themselves in three separate chambers, or rather the clergy and the aristocracy withdrew each into a separate chamber. The majority of the aristocracy claimed what they call the privilege of voting as a separate body, and of giving their consent or their negative in that manner; and many of the bishops and high-beneficed clergy claimed the same privilege on the part of their order.

The *tiers état* (as they were called) disowned all knowledge of artificial orders and privileges; and they were not only resolute on this point but somewhat disdainful. They began to consider aristocracy as a kind of fungus growing out of the corruption of society, that could not be admitted even as a branch of it; and from the disposition the aristocracy had shown by upholding *lettres de cachet* and in sundry other instances, it was manifest that no constitution could be formed by admitting men in any other character than as national men.

After various altercations on this head, the *tiers état*, or commons (as they were then called), declared themselves (on a motion made for that purpose by the Abbé Sieyès) "THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE NATION; and that the two orders could be considered but as deputies of corporations, and could only have a deliberative voice but when they assembled in a national character, with the national representatives." This proceeding extinguished the style of *états généraux* or states-general, and erected it into the style it now bears, that of *l'assemblée nationale* or national assembly.

This motion was not made in a precipitate manner: it was the result of cool deliberation, and concerted between the national

representatives and the patriotic members of the two chambers, who saw into the folly, mischief, and injustice of artificial privileged distinctions. It was become evident that no constitution, worthy of being called by that name, could be established on anything less than a national ground. The aristocracy had hitherto opposed the despotism of the court and affected the language of patriotism; but it opposed it as its rival (as the English barons opposed King John); and it now opposed the nation from the same motives.

On carrying this motion the national representatives, as had been concerted, sent an invitation to the two chambers to unite with them in a national character, and proceed to business. A majority of the clergy, chiefly of the parish priests, withdrew from the clerical chamber and joined the nation; and forty-five from the other chamber joined in like manner. There is a sort of secret history belonging to this last circumstance which is necessary to its explanation; it was not judged prudent that all the patriotic members of the chamber, styling itself the nobles, should quit it at once; and in consequence of this arrangement, they drew off by degrees, always leaving some, as well to reason the case as to watch the suspected. In a little time the numbers increased from forty-five to eighty, and soon after to a greater number; which with a majority of the clergy, and the whole of the national representatives, put the malcontents in a very diminutive condition.

The king who, very different to the general class called by that name, is a man of a good heart, showed himself disposed to recommend a union of the three chambers on the ground the national assembly had taken; but the malcontents exerted themselves to prevent it, and began now to have another project in view. Their numbers consisted of a majority of the aristocratical chamber, and a minority of the clerical chamber, chiefly of bishops and high beneficed clergy; and these men were determined to put everything at issue, as well by strength as by stratagem. They had no objection to a constitution; but it must be such a one as themselves should dictate, and suited to their own views and particular situations. On the other hand

the nation disowned knowing anything of them but as citizens, and was determined to shut out all such upstart pretensions. The more aristocracy appeared, the more it was despised; there was a visible imbecility and want of intellects in the majority, a sort of *je ne sais quoi*, that while it affected to be more than citizen, was less than man. It lost ground more from contempt than from hatred; and was rather jeered at as an ass, than dreaded as a lion. This is the general character of aristocracy, or what are called nobles or nobility, or rather no-ability, in all countries.

The plan of the malcontents consisted now of two things; either to deliberate and vote by chambers (or orders), more especially on all questions respecting a constitution (by which the aristocratical chamber would have had a negative on any article of the constitution), or in case they could not accomplish this object, to overthrow the national assembly entirely.

To effect one or the other of these objects, they began now to cultivate a friendship with the despotism they had hitherto attempted to rival, and the Count d'Artois became their chief. The king (who has since declared himself deceived into their measures) held, according to the old form, *a bed of justice*, in which he accorded to the deliberation and vote *par tête* (by head) upon several objects; but reserved the deliberation and vote upon all questions respecting a constitution to the three chambers separately. This declaration of the king was made against the advice of M. Neckar, who now began to perceive that he was growing out of fashion at court, and that another minister was in contemplation.

As the form of sitting in separate chambers was yet apparently kept up, though essentially destroyed, the national representatives, immediately after this declaration of the king, resorted to their chambers to consult on a protest against it; and the minority of the chamber (calling itself the nobles) who had joined the national cause retired to a private house to consult in like manner. The malcontents had by this time concerted their measures with the court, which Count d'Artois undertook to conduct; and as they saw from the discontent which the declaration excited, and the opposition making against it, that they

could not obtain a control over the intended constitution by a separate vote, they prepared themselves for their final object—that of conspiring against the national assembly and overthrowing it.

The next morning the door of the chamber of the national assembly was shut against them, and guarded by troops; and the members were refused admittance. On this they withdrew to a tennis ground in the neighborhood of Versailles, as the most convenient place they could find, and after renewing their session, took an oath never to separate from each other, under any circumstances whatever, death excepted, until they had established a constitution. As the experiment of shutting up the house had no other effect than that of producing a closer connection in the members, it was opened again the next day, and the public business recommenced in the usual place.

We now are to have in view the forming the new ministry which was to accomplish the overthrow of the national assembly. But as force would be necessary, orders were issued to assemble thirty thousand troops, the command of which was given to Broglio, one of the new-intended ministry, who was recalled from the country for this purpose. But as some management was necessary to keep this plan concealed till the moment it should be ready for execution, it is to this policy that a declaration made by the Count d'Artois must be attributed, and which is here proper to be introduced.

It could not but occur, that while the malcontents continued to resort to their chambers separate from the national assembly, that more jealousy would be excited than if they were mixed with it, and that the plot might be suspected. But as they had taken their ground, and now wanted a pretense for quitting it, it was necessary that one should be devised. This was effectually accomplished by a declaration made by Count d'Artois, that "*if they took not a part in the national assembly, the life of the king would be endangered,*" on which they quitted their chambers and mixed with the assembly in one body.

At the time this declaration was made, it was generally treated as a piece of absurdity in the Count d'Artois, and calculated

merely to relieve the outstanding members of the two chambers from the diminutive situation they were put in; and if nothing more had followed, this conclusion would have been good. But as things best explain themselves by events, this apparent union was only a cover to the machinations that were secretly going on, and the declaration accommodated itself to answer that purpose. In a little time the national assembly found itself surrounded by troops, and thousands daily arriving. On this a very strong declaration was made by the national assembly to the king, remonstrating on the impropriety of the measure, and demanding the reason. The king, who was not in the secret of this business, as himself afterwards declared, gave substantially for answer that he had no other object in view than to preserve public tranquillity, which appeared to be much disturbed.

But in a few days from this time the plot unravelled itself. M. Neckar and the ministry were displaced, and a new one formed of the enemies of the revolution; and Broglio, with between twenty-five and thirty thousand foreign troops, was arrived to support them. The mask was now thrown off, and matters were come to a crisis. The event was that in the space of three days the new ministry and all their abettors found it prudent to fly the nation; the Bastile was taken, and Broglio and his foreign troops dispersed; as is already related in a former part of this work.

There are some curious circumstances in the history of this short-lived ministry, and this brief attempt at a counter-revolution. The palace of Versailles, where the court was sitting, was not more than four hundred yards distant from the hall where the national assembly was sitting. The two places were at this moment like the separate headquarters of two combatant enemies; yet the court was as perfectly ignorant of the information which had arrived from Paris to the national assembly, as if it had resided at a hundred miles distance. The then Marquis de la Fayette, who (as has been already mentioned) was chosen to preside in the national assembly on this particular occasion, named, by order of the assembly, three successive deputations

to the king, on the day and up to the evening on which the Bastille was taken, to inform and confer with him on the state of affairs; but the ministry, who knew not so much as that it was attacked, precluded all communication and were solacing themselves how dexterously they had succeeded: but in a few hours the accounts arrived so thick and fast, that they had to start from their desks and run; some set off in one disguise, and some in another, and none in their own character. Their anxiety now was to outride the news lest they should be stopped, which, though it flew fast, flew not so fast as themselves.

It is worth remarking that the national assembly neither pursued those fugitive conspirators, nor took any notice of them, nor sought to retaliate in any shape whatever. Occupied with establishing a constitution founded on the rights of man and the authority of the people, the only authority on which government has a right to exist in any country, the national assembly felt none of those mean passions which mark the character of impertinent governments, founding themselves on their own authority, or on the absurdity of hereditary succession. It is the faculty of the human mind to become what it contemplates, and to act in unison with its object.

#### [THE FRENCH DECLARATION OF RIGHTS]

One of the first works of the national assembly, instead of vindictive proclamations as has been the case with other governments, published a declaration of the rights of man as the basis on which the new constitution was to be built, and which is here subjoined:

#### *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of Citizens*

“The representatives of the people of France, formed into a national assembly, considering that ignorance, neglect, or contempt of human rights, are the sole causes of public misfortunes, and corruptions of government, have resolved to set forth, in a solemn declaration, these natural, imprescriptible, and unalienable rights: that this declaration being constantly

present to the minds of the body social, they may be ever kept attentive to their rights and their duties: that the acts of the legislative and executive powers of government, being capable of being every moment compared with the end of political institutions, may be more respected: and also, that the future claims of the citizens, being directed by simple and incontestible principles, may always tend to the maintenance of the constitution and the general happiness.

"For these reasons the national assembly doth recognize and declare, in the presence of the supreme being, and with a hope of his blessing and favor, the following *sacred* rights of men and of citizens:

"I. Men are born and always continue free and equal in respect of their rights. Civil distinctions, therefore, can only be founded on public utility.

"II. The end of all political associations is the preservation of the natural and imprescriptible rights of man; and these rights are liberty, property, security, and resistance of oppression.

"III. The nation is essentially the source of all sovereignty: nor can any *individual* or *any body of men*, be entitled to any authority which is not expressly derived from it.

"IV. Political liberty consists in the power of doing whatever does not injure another. The exercise of the natural rights of every man has no other limits than those which are necessary to secure to every *other* man the free exercise of the same rights; and these limits are determinable only by the law.

"V. The law ought to prohibit only actions hurtful to society. What is not prohibited by the law, should not be hindered; nor should anyone be compelled to that which the law does not require.

"VI. The law is an expression of the will of the community. All citizens have a right to concur, either personally, or by their representatives, in its formation. It should be the same to all, whether it protects or punishes; and all being equal in its sight, are equally eligible to all honors, places, and employments, according to their different abilities, without any other distinction than that created by their virtues and talents.

"VII. No man should be accused, arrested, or held in confinement, except in cases determined by the law, and according to the forms which it has prescribed. All who promote, solicit,

execute, or cause to be executed, arbitrary orders, ought to be punished; and every citizen called upon or apprehended by virtue of the law, ought immediately to obey, and not render himself culpable by resistance.

"VIII. The law ought to impose no other penalties than such as are absolutely and evidently necessary: and no one ought to be punished, but in virtue of a law promulgated before the offense, and legally applied.

"IX. Every man being presumed innocent till he has been convicted, whenever his detention becomes indispensable, all rigor to him, more than is necessary to secure his person, ought to be provided against by the law.

"X. No man ought to be molested on account of his opinions, not even on account of his religious opinions, provided his avowal of them does not disturb the public order established by law.

"XI. The unrestrained communication of thoughts and opinions being one of the most precious rights of man, every citizen may speak, write, and publish freely, provided he is responsible for the abuse of this liberty in cases determined by the law.

"XII. A public force being necessary to give security to the rights of men and of citizens, that force is instituted for the benefit of the community, and not for the particular benefit of the persons with whom it is entrusted.

"XIII. A common contribution being necessary for the support of the public force, and for defraying the other expenses of government, it ought to be divided equally among the members of the community, according to their abilities.

"XIV. Every citizen has a right, either by himself or his representative, to a free voice in determining the necessity of public contributions, the appropriation of them, and their amount, mode of assessment, and duration.

"XV. Every community has a right to demand of all its agents, an account of their conduct.

"XVI. Every community in which a separation of powers and a security of rights is not provided for, wants a constitution.

"XVII. The right to property being inviolable and sacred, no one ought to be deprived of it, except in cases of evident public necessity legally ascertained, and on condition of a previous just indemnity."

## [OBSERVATIONS ON THE DECLARATION]

The three first articles comprehend in general terms the whole of a declaration of rights: all the succeeding articles either originate out of them, or follow as elucidations. The 4th, 5th, and 6th, define more particularly what is only generally expressed in the 1st, 2d, and 3d.

The 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, and 11th articles are declaratory of *principles* upon which laws shall be construed conformable to *rights* already declared. But it is questioned by some very good people in France, as well as in other countries, whether the 10th article sufficiently guarantees the right it is intended to accord with; besides which, it takes off from the divine dignity of religion, and weakens its operative force upon the mind to make it a subject of human laws. It then presents itself to man, like light intercepted by a cloudy medium, in which the source of it is obscured from his sight, and he sees nothing to reverence in the dusky rays.<sup>1</sup>

The remaining articles, beginning with the twelfth, are substantially contained in the principles of the preceding articles; but, in the particular situation in which France then was, having to undo what was wrong, as well as to set up what was right, it

<sup>1</sup>There is a single idea which, if it strikes rightly upon the mind, either in a legal or a religious sense, will prevent any man, or any body of men, or any government, from going wrong on the subject of religion: which is, that before any human institutions of government were known in the world, there existed, if I may so express it, a compact between God and man from the beginning of time; and that as the relation and condition which man in his individual person stands in towards his maker cannot be changed by any human laws or human authority, that religious devotion, which is a part of this compact, cannot so much as be made a subject of human laws; and that all laws must conform themselves to this prior existing compact, and not assume to make the compact conform to the laws which, besides being human, are subsequent thereto. The first act of man, when he looked around and saw himself a creature which he did not make and a world furnished for his reception, must have been devotion; and devotion must ever continue sacred to every individual man as it appears right to him; and governments do mischief by interfering. [Paine's note.]

was proper to be more particular than in another condition of things would be necessary.

While the declaration of rights was before the national assembly, some of its members remarked that if a declaration of rights was published it should be accompanied by a declaration of duties. The observation discovered a mind that reflected, and it only erred by not reflecting far enough. A declaration of rights is, by reciprocity, a declaration of duties also. Whatever is my right as a man, is also the right of another; and it becomes my duty to guarantee, as well as to possess.

The three first articles are the basis of liberty as well individual as national; nor can any country be called free whose government does not take its beginning from the principles they contain and continue to preserve them pure; and the whole of the declaration of rights is of more value to the world, and will do more good, than all the laws and statutes that have yet been promulgated.

In the declaratory exordium which prefaces the declaration of rights, we see the solemn and majestic spectacle of a nation opening its commission, under the auspices of its Creator, to establish a government; a scene so new, and so transcendently unequalled by anything in the European world, that the name of a revolution is inexpressive of its character, and it rises into a regeneration of man. What are the present governments of Europe but a scene of iniquity and oppression? What is that of England? Do not its own inhabitants say it is a market where every man has his price, and where corruption is common traffic, at the expense of a deluded people? No wonder, then, that the French revolution is traduced. Had it confined itself merely to the destruction of flagrant despotism, perhaps Mr. Burke and some others had been silent. Their cry now is, "It has gone too far": that is, gone too far for them. It stares corruption in the face, and the venal tribe are all alarmed. Their fear discovers itself in their outrage, and they are but publishing the groans of a wounded vice. But from such opposition, the French revolution, instead of suffering, receives homage. The more it is struck, the more sparks it will emit; and the fear is, it will not be

struck enough. It has nothing to dread from attacks. Truth has given it an establishment; and time will record it with a name as lasting as its own.

#### MISCELLANEOUS CHAPTER

To prevent interrupting the argument in the preceding part of this work, or the narrative that follows it, I reserved some observations to be thrown together into a miscellaneous chapter; by which variety might not be censured for confusion. Mr. Burke's book is *all* miscellany. His intention was to make an attack on the French revolution; but instead of proceeding with an orderly arrangement, he has stormed it with a mob of ideas, tumbling over and destroying one another.

But this confusion and contradiction in Mr. Burke's book is easily accounted for. When a man in any cause attempts to steer his course by anything else than some popular truth or principle, he is sure to be lost. It is beyond the compass of his capacity to keep all the parts of an argument together, and make them unite in one issue, by any other means than having his guide always in view. Neither memory nor invention will supply the want of it. The former fails him, and the latter betrays him.

Notwithstanding the nonsense, for it deserves no better name, that Mr. Burke has asserted about hereditary rights, and hereditary succession, and that a nation has not a right to form a government for itself, it happened to fall in his way to give some account of what government is. "Government," says he, "is a contrivance of human wisdom."

Admitting that government is a contrivance of human wisdom, it must necessarily follow that hereditary succession and hereditary rights (as they are called) can make no part of it, because it is impossible to make wisdom hereditary; and, on the other hand, *that* cannot be a wise contrivance which in its operation may commit the government of a nation to the wisdom of an idiot. The ground which Mr. Burke now takes is fatal to every part of his cause. The argument changes from hereditary rights to hereditary wisdom; and the question is,

who is the wisest man? He must now show that everyone in the line of hereditary succession was a Solomon, or his title is not good to be a king. What a stroke has Mr. Burke now made! To use a sailor's phrase he has *swabbed the deck*, and scarcely left a name legible in the list of kings; and he has mowed down and thinned the house of peers with a scythe as formidable as death and time.

But Mr. Burke appears to have been aware of this retort, and he has taken care to guard against it by making government to be not only a *contrivance* of human wisdom, but a *monopoly* of wisdom. He puts the nation as fools on one side, and places his government of wisdom, all wise men of Gotham, on the other side; and he then proclaims and says that "*men have a RIGHT that their WANTS should be provided for by this wisdom.*" Having thus made proclamation, he next proceeds to explain to them what their *wants* are, and also what their *rights* are. In this he has succeeded dexterously, for he makes their wants to be a *want* of wisdom; but as this is but cold comfort, he then informs them that they have a *right* (not to any of the wisdom) but to be governed by it; and in order to impress them with a solemn reverence for this monopoly-government of wisdom, and of its vast capacity for all purposes, possible or impossible, right or wrong, he proceeds with astrological, mysterious importance, to tell them its powers in these words—"The rights of men in government are their advantages; and these are often in balances between differences of good; and in compromises sometimes between *good* and *evil*, and sometimes between *evil* and *evil*. Political reason is a *computing principle*; adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing, morally and not metaphysically or mathematically, true moral demonstrations."

As the wondering audience whom Mr. Burke supposes himself talking to may not understand all this jargon, I will undertake to be its interpreter. The meaning then, good people, of all this is *that government is governed by no principle whatever; that it can make evil good, or good evil, just as it pleases. In short, that government is arbitrary power.*

But there are some things which Mr. Burke has forgotten:

rst, he has not shown where the wisdom originally came from; and, 2d, he has not shown by what authority it first began to act. In the manner he introduced the matters, it is either government stealing wisdom, or wisdom stealing government. It is without an origin, and its powers without authority. In short, it is usurpation.

Whether it be from a sense of shame, or from a consciousness of some radical defect in government necessary to be kept out of sight, or from both, or from some other cause, I undertake not to determine; but so it is, that a monarchical reasoner never traces government to its source, or from its source. It is one of the *shibboleths* by which he may be known. A thousand years hence, those who shall live in America, or in France, will look back with contemplative pride on the origin of their governments, and say, *this was the work of our glorious ancestors!* But what can a monarchical talker say? What has he to exult in? Alas! he has nothing. A certain something forbids him to look back to a beginning, lest some robber, or some Robin Hood, should rise from the long obscurity of time and say, *I am the origin.* Hard as Mr. Burke labored under the regency bill and hereditary succession two years ago, and much as he dived for precedents, he still had not boldness enough to bring up William of Normandy and say, *there is the head of the list, there is the fountain of honor*, the son of a prostitute, and the plunderer of the English nation.

The opinions of men, with respect to government, are changing fast in all countries. The revolutions of America and France have thrown a beam of light over the world, which reaches into man. The enormous expense of governments has provoked people to think by making them feel; and when once the veil begins to rend, it admits not of repair. Ignorance is of a peculiar nature; once dispelled, it is impossible to re-establish it. It is not originally a thing of itself, but is only the absence of knowledge; and though man may be *kept ignorant*, he cannot be *made ignorant*. The mind in discovering truths acts in the same manner as it acts through the eye in discovering an object; when once any object has been seen, it

is impossible to put the mind back to the same condition it was in before it saw it. Those who talk of a counter-revolution in France show how little they understand of man. There does not exist in the compass of language an arrangement of words to express so much as the means of effecting a counter-revolution. The means must be an obliteration of knowledge; and it has never yet been discovered how to make a man *unknow* his knowledge, or *unthink* his thoughts.

Mr. Burke is laboring in vain to stop the progress of knowledge; and it comes with the worse grace from him, as there is a certain transaction known in the city, which renders him suspected of being a pensioner in a fictitious name. This may account for some strange doctrine he has advanced in his book, which, though he points it at the Revolution society, is effectually directed against the whole nation.

"The king of England," says he, "holds *his* crown (for it does not belong to the nation, according to Mr. Burke) in *contempt* of the choice of the Revolution society, who have not a single vote for a king among them either *individually* or *collectively*; and his majesty's heirs, each in his time and order, will come to the crown *with the same contempt* of their choice with which his majesty has succeeded to that which he now wears."

As to who is king of England or elsewhere, or whether there is any at all, or whether the people choose a Cherokee chief, or a Hessian hussar for a king, is not a matter that I trouble myself about, be that to themselves; but with respect to the doctrine, so far as it relates to the rights of men and nations, it is as abominable as anything ever uttered in the most enslaved country under heaven. Whether it sounds worse to my ear, by not being accustomed to hear such despotism, than it does to the ear of another person, I am not so well a judge of; but of its abominable principle, I am at no loss to judge.

It is not the Revolution society that Mr. Burke means; it is the nation, as well in its *original* as in its *representative* character; and he has taken care to make himself understood, by saying that they have not a vote either *collectively* or *individually*. The Revolution society is composed of citizens of all denomina-

tions, and of members of both houses of parliament, and consequently, if there is not a right to vote in any of the characters, there can be no right to any, either in the nation or in its parliament. This ought to be a caution to every country, how it imports foreign families to be kings. It is somewhat curious to observe that although the people of England have been in the habit of talking about the kings, it is always a foreign house of kings; hating foreigners, yet governed by them. It is now the house of Brunswick, one of the petty tribes of Germany.

It has hitherto been the practice of the English parliaments to regulate what was called the succession (taking it for granted that the nation then continued to accord to the form of annexing a monarchical branch to its government; for without this, the parliament could not have had authority to have sent either to Holland or to Hanover, or to impose a king upon a nation against its will). And this must be the utmost limit to which parliament can go upon the case; but the right of the nation goes to the *whole* case, because it is the right of changing the *whole* form of government. The right of a parliament is only a right in trust, a right by delegation, and that but from a very small part of the nation; and one of its houses has not even this. But the right of the nation is an original right, as universal as taxation. The nation is the paymaster of everything, and everything must conform to its general will.

I remember taking notice of a speech in what is called the English house of peers by the then Earl of Shelbourne, and I think it was at the time he was minister, which is applicable to this case. I do not directly charge my memory with every particular; but the words and the purport as nearly as I remember were these, *that the form of government was a matter wholly at the will of a nation at all times; that if it chose a monarchical form, it had a right to have it so, and if it afterwards chose to be a republic, it had a right to be a republic, and to say to a king, we have no longer any occasion for you.*

When Mr. Burke says that "his majesty's heirs and successors, each in their time and order, will come to the crown with the same contempt of their choice with which his majesty has suc-

ceeded to that he wears," it is saying too much even to the humblest individual in the country, part of whose daily labor goes towards making up the million sterling a year which the country gives a person it styles a king. Government with insolence is despotism; but when contempt is added, it becomes worse; and to pay for contempt is the excess of slavery. This species of government comes from Germany; and reminds me of what one of the Brunswick soldiers told me, who was taken prisoner by the Americans in the late war; "Ah!" said he, "America is a fine free country, it is worth people's fighting for; I know the difference by knowing my own; in my country, if the prince say, eat straw, we eat straw." God help that country, thought I, be it England or elsewhere, whose liberties are not to be protected by German principles of government and princes of Brunswick.

As Mr. Burke sometimes speaks of England, sometimes of France, and sometimes of the world and of government in general, it is difficult to answer his book without apparently meeting him on the same ground. Although principles of government are general subjects, it is next to impossible in many cases to separate them from the idea of place and circumstance; and the more so when circumstances are put for arguments, which is frequently the case with Mr. Burke.

In the former part of his book, addressing himself to the people of France, he says, "no experience has taught us (meaning the English) that in any other course or method than that of an *hereditary crown*, can our liberties be regularly perpetuated and preserved sacred as our *hereditary right*." I ask Mr. Burke who is to take them away? M. de la Fayette, in speaking of France, says, "*For a nation to be free, it is sufficient that she wills it.*" But Mr. Burke represents England as wanting capacity to take care of itself; and that its liberties must be taken care of by a king holding it in "contempt." If England is sunk to this, it is preparing itself to eat straw, as in Hanover or in Brunswick. But besides the folly of the declaration, it happens that the facts are all against Mr. Burke. It was by the government *being hereditary* that the liberties of the people were endangered.

Charles I and James II are instances of this truth, yet neither of them went so far as to hold the nation in contempt.

As it is sometimes of advantage to the people of one country to hear what those of other countries have to say respecting it, it is possible that the people of France may learn something from Mr. Burke's book, and that the people of England may also learn something from the answers it will occasion. When nations fall out about freedom, a wide field of debate is opened. The argument commences with the rights of war, without its evils; and as knowledge is the object contended for, the party that sustains the defeat obtains the prize.

Mr. Burke talks about what he calls an hereditary crown, as if it were some production of nature; or as if, like time, it had power to operate not only independently but in spite of man; or as if it were a thing or a subject universally consented to. Alas! it has none of those properties, but is the reverse of them all. It is a thing of imagination, the propriety of which is more than doubted, and the legality of which in a few years will be denied.

But to arrange this matter in a clearer view than what general expressions can convey, it will be necessary to state the distinct heads under which (what is called) an hereditary crown, or, more properly speaking, an hereditary succession to the government of a nation, can be considered, which are,

1st, The right of a particular family to establish itself.

2d. The right of a nation to establish a particular family.

With respect to the *first* of these heads, that of a family establishing itself with hereditary powers on its own authority, and independent of the consent of a nation, all men will concur in calling it despotism; and it would be trespassing on their understanding to attempt to prove it.

But the *second* head, that of a nation establishing a particular family with *hereditary powers*, does not present itself as despotism on the first reflection; but if men will permit a second reflection to take place, and carry that reflection forward but one remove out of their own persons to that of their offspring, they will then see that hereditary succession becomes in its

consequences the same despotism to others, which they reprobated for themselves. It operates to preclude the consent of the succeeding generation, and the preclusion of consent is despotism. When the person who at any time shall be in possession of a government, or those who stand in succession to him, shall say to a nation, I hold this power in "contempt" of you, it signifies not on what authority he pretends to say it. It is no relief, but an aggravation to a person in slavery, to reflect that he was sold by his parent; and as that which heightens the criminality of an act cannot be produced to prove the legality of it, hereditary succession cannot be established as a legal thing.

In order to arrive at a more perfect decision on this head, it will be proper to consider the generation which undertakes to establish a family with *hereditary powers* separately from the generations which are to follow; and also to consider the character in which the *first* generation acts with respect to succeeding generations.

The generation which selects a person and puts him at the head of its government, either with the title of king or any other distinction, acts its *own choice*, be it wise or foolish, as a free agent for itself. The person so set up is not hereditary, but selected and appointed; and the generation who sets him up does not live under an hereditary government, but under a government of its own choice and establishment. Were the generation who sets him up, and the person so set up, to live forever, it never could become hereditary succession; hereditary succession can only follow on death of the first parties.

As therefore hereditary succession is out of the question with respect to the *first* generation, we have now to consider the character in which *that* generation acts with respect to the commencing generation and to all succeeding ones.

It assumes a character to which it has neither right nor title. It changes itself from a *legislator* to a *testator*, and affects to make its will, which is to have operation after the demise of the makers, to bequeath the government; and it not only attempts to bequeath, but to establish on the succeeding genera-

tion a new and different form of government under which itself lived. Itself, as is before observed, lived not under an hereditary government, but under a government of its own choice and establishment; and it now attempts by virtue of a will and testament (and which it has not authority to make) to take from the commencing generation and all future ones, the rights and free agency by which itself acted.

But exclusive of the right which any generation has to act collectively as a testator, the objects to which it applies itself in this case are not within the compass of any law, or of any will or testament.

The rights of men in society are neither devisable nor transferable nor annihilable, but are descendable only; and it is not in the power of any generation to intercept finally and cut off the descent. If the present generation, or any other, are disposed to be slaves, it does not lessen the right of the succeeding generation to be free: wrongs cannot have a legal descent. When Mr. Burke attempts to maintain that the *English nation did, at the revolution of 1688, most solemnly renounce and abdicate their rights for themselves, and for all their posterity forever*, he speaks a language that merits not reply, and which can only excite contempt for his prostitute principles, or pity for his ignorance.

In whatever light hereditary succession, as growing out of the will and testament of some former generation, presents itself, it is an absurdity. A cannot make a will to take from B his property, and give it to C; yet this is the manner in which (what is called) hereditary succession by law operates. A certain former generation made a will to take away the rights of the commencing generation and all future ones, and convey those rights to a third person, who afterwards comes forward and tells them, in Mr. Burke's language, that they have *no rights*, that their rights are already bequeathed to him, and that he will govern in *contempt* of them. From such principles, and such ignorance, good Lord deliver the world!

But, after all, what is this metaphor, called a crown, or rather, what is monarchy? Is it a thing, or is it a name, or is it a

fraud? Is it a "contrivance of human wisdom," or human craft, to obtain money from a nation under specious pretenses? Is it a thing necessary to a nation? If it is, in what does that necessity consist, what service does it perform, what is its business, and what are its merits? Doth the virtue consist in the metaphor, or in the man? Doth the goldsmith that makes the crown, make the virtue also? Doth it operate like Fortunatus's wishing cap, or Harlequin's wooden sword? Doth it make a man a conjuror? In fine, what is it? It appears to be a something going much out of fashion, falling into ridicule, and rejected in some countries both as unnecessary and expensive. In America it is considered as an absurdity, and in France it has so far declined that the goodness of the man and the respect for his personal character are the only things that preserve the appearance of its existence.

If government be what Mr. Burke describes it, "a contrivance of human wisdom," I might ask him if wisdom was at such a low ebb in England that it was become necessary to import it from Holland and from Hanover? But I will do the country the justice to say that that was not the case; and even if it was, it mistook the cargo. The wisdom of every country, when properly exerted, is sufficient for all its purposes; and there could exist no more real occasion in England to have sent for a Dutch stadtholder, or a German elector, than there was in America to have done a similar thing. If a country does not understand its own affairs, how is a foreigner to understand them, who knows neither its laws, its manners, nor its language? If there existed a man so transcendently wise above all others that his wisdom was necessary to instruct a nation, some reason might be offered for monarchy; but when we cast our eyes about a country, and observe how every part understands its own affairs; and when we look around the world, and see that of all men in it, the race of kings are the most insignificant in capacity, our reason cannot fail to ask us, What are those men kept for?

If there is anything in monarchy which we people of America do not understand, I wish Mr. Burke would be so kind as to

inform us. I see in America a government extending over a country ten times as large as England, and conducted with regularity for a fortieth part of the expense which government costs in England. If I ask a man in America if he wants a king, he retorts, and asks me if I take him for an idiot. How is it that this difference happens: are we more or less wise than others? I see in America the generality of the people living in a style of plenty unknown in monarchical countries; and I see that the principle of its government, which is that of the *equal rights of man*, is making a rapid progress in the world.

If monarchy is a useless thing, why is it kept up anywhere? And if a necessary thing, how can it be dispensed with? That *civil government* is necessary, all civilized nations will agree in; but civil government is republican government. All that part of the government of England which begins with the office of constable, and proceeds through the department of magistrate, quarter-session, and general assize, including the trial by jury, is republican government. Nothing of monarchy appears in any part of it, except the name which William the Conqueror imposed upon the English, that of obliging them to call him "their sovereign lord the king."

It is easy to conceive that a band of interested men, such as placemen, pensioners, lords of the bed-chamber, lords of the kitchen, lords of the necessary-house, and the Lord knows what besides, can find as many reasons for monarchy as their salaries, paid at the expense of the country, amount to; but if I ask the farmer, the manufacturer, the merchant, the tradesman, and down through all the occupations of life to the common laborer, what service monarchy is to him, he can give me no answer. If I ask him what monarchy is, he believes it is something like a sinecure.

Notwithstanding the taxes of England amount to almost seventeen million a year, said to be for the expenses of government, it is still evident that the sense of the nation is left to govern itself, and does govern itself by magistrates and juries, almost at its own charge, on republican principles, exclusive of the expense of taxes. The salaries of the judges are almost

the only charge that is paid out of the revenue. Considering that all the internal government is executed by the people, the taxes of England ought to be the lightest of any nation in Europe; instead of which, they are the contrary. As this cannot be accounted for on the score of civil government, the subject necessarily extends itself to the monarchical part.

When the people of England sent for George I (and it would puzzle a wiser man than Mr. Burke to discover for what he could be wanted, or what service he could render) they ought at least to have conditioned for the abandonment of Hanover. Besides the endless German intrigues that must follow from a German elector's being king of England, there is a natural impossibility of uniting in the same person the principles of freedom and the principles of despotism, or, as it is called in England, arbitrary power. A German elector is, in his electorate, a despot: how then should it be expected that he should be attached to principles of liberty in one country, while his interest in another was to be supported by despotism? The union cannot exist; and it might easily have been foreseen that German electors would make German kings, or in Mr. Burke's words, would assume government with "contempt." The English have been in the habit of considering a king of England only in the character in which he appears to them; whereas the same person, while the connection lasts, has a home-seat in another country, the interest of which is at variance with their own, and the principles of the government in opposition to each other. To such a person England will appear as a town-residence, and the electorate as the estate. The English may wish, as I believe they do, success to the principles of liberty in France, or in Germany; but a German elector trembles for the fate of despotism in his electorate; and the duchy of Mecklenburg, where the present queen's family governs, is under the same wretched state of arbitrary power, and the people in slavish vassalage.

There never was a time when it became the English to watch continental intrigues more circumspectly than at the present moment, and to distinguish the politics of the electorate from

the politics of the nation. The revolution of France has entirely changed the ground with respect to England and France, as nations; but the German despots, with Prussia at their head, are combining against liberty; and the fondness of Mr. Pitt for office, and the interest which all his family connections have obtained, do not give sufficient security against this intrigue.

As everything which passes in the world becomes matter for history, I will now quit this subject, and take a concise review of the state of parties and politics in England, as Mr. Burke has done in France.

Whether the present reign commenced with contempt, I leave to Mr. Burke: certain however it is that it had strongly that appearance. The animosity of the English nation, it is very well remembered, ran high; and had the true principles of liberty been as well understood then as they now promise to be, it is probable the nation would not have patiently submitted to so much. George I and II were sensible of a rival in the remains of the Stuarts; and as they could not but consider themselves as standing on their good behavior, they had prudence to keep their German principles of government to themselves; but as the Stuart family wore away, the prudence became less necessary.

The contest between rights and what were called prerogatives continued to heat the nation till some time after the conclusion of the American revolution, when all at once it fell a calm; execration exchanged itself for applause, and court popularity sprung up like a mushroom in the night.

To account for this sudden transition it is proper to observe that there are two distinct species of popularity; the one excited by merit, the other by resentment. As the nation had formed itself into two parties, and each was extolling the merits of its parliamentary champions for and against the prerogative, nothing could operate to give a more general shock than an immediate coalition of the champions themselves. The partisans of each being thus suddenly left in the lurch, and mutually heated with disgust at the measure, felt no other relief than uniting in a common execration against both. A higher stimu-

lus of resentment being thus excited than what the contest on prerogatives had occasioned, the nation quitted all former objects of rights and wrongs, and sought only that of gratification. The indignation at the coalition so effectually superseded the indignation against the court as to extinguish it, and without any change of principles on the part of the court, the same people who had reprobated its despotism, united with it to revenge themselves on the coalition parliament. The case was not which they liked best—but which they hated most; and the least hated passed for love. The dissolution of the coalition parliament, as it afforded the means of gratifying the resentment of the nation, could not fail to be popular; and from hence arose the popularity of the court.

Transitions of this kind exhibit to us a nation under the government of temper instead of a fixed and steady principle; and having once committed itself, however rashly, it feels itself urged along to justify by continuance its first proceeding. Measures which at other times it would censure, it now approves, and acts persuasion upon itself to suffocate its judgment.

On the return of a new parliament, the new minister, Mr. Pitt, found himself in a secure majority; and the nation gave him credit, not out of regard to himself, but because it had resolved to do it out of resentment to another. He introduced himself to public notice by a proposed reform of parliament, which in its operation would have amounted to a public justification of corruption. The nation was to be at the expense of buying up the rotten boroughs, whereas it ought to punish the persons who deal in the traffic.

Passing over the two bubbles, of the Dutch business and the million a year to sink the national debt, the matter which is most prominent is the affair of the regency. Never in the course of my observation was delusion more successfully acted, nor a nation more completely deceived. But, to make this appear, it will be necessary to go over the circumstances.

Mr. Fox had stated in the house of commons that the prince of Wales, as heir in succession, had a right in himself to assume the government. This was opposed by Mr. Pitt; and, so far

small part of the nation; but were the election as universal as taxation, which it ought to be, it would still be only the organ of the nation, and cannot possess inherent rights. When the national assembly of France resolves a matter, the resolve is made in right of the nation; but Mr. Pitt, on all national questions, so far as they refer to the house of commons, absorbs the right of the nation into the organ, and makes the organ into a nation, and the nation itself into a cipher.

In a few words, the question on the regency was a question on a million a year, which is appropriated to the executive department; and Mr. Pitt could not possess himself of any management of this sum without setting up the supremacy of parliament; and when this was accomplished, it was indifferent who should be regent, as he must be regent at his own cost. Among the curiosities which this contentious debate afforded was that of making the great seal into a king; the affixing of which to an act was to be royal authority. If, therefore, royal authority is a great seal, it consequently is in itself nothing; and a good constitution would be of infinitely more value to the nation than what the three nominal powers, as they now stand, are worth.

The continual use of the word *constitution* in the English parliament shows there is none, and that the whole is merely a form of government without a constitution, and constituting itself with what powers it pleases. If there was a constitution, it certainly would be referred to; and the debate on any constitutional point would terminate by producing the constitution. One member says, this is constitutional; another says, that is constitutional. Today it is one thing; tomorrow it is something else—while the maintaining the debate proves there is none. Constitution is now the cant word of parliament, turning itself to the ear of the nation. Formerly it was the *universal supremacy and the omnipotence of parliament*. But since the progress of liberty in France, those phrases have a despotic harshness in their note; and the English parliament has caught the fashion from the national assembly, but without the substance, of speaking of a *constitution*.

As the present generation of people in England did not make the government, they are not accountable for any of its defects; but that sooner or later it must come into their hands to undergo a constitutional reformation is as certain as that the same thing has happened in France. If France, with a revenue of nearly twenty-four millions sterling, with an extent of rich and fertile country above four times larger than England, with a population of twenty-four millions of inhabitants to support taxation, with upwards of ninety millions sterling of gold and silver circulating in the nation, and with a debt less than the present debt of England, still found it necessary, from whatever cause, to come to a settlement of its affairs, it solves the problem of funding for both countries.

It is out of the question to say how long what is called the English constitution has lasted and to argue from thence how long it is to last; the question is how long can the funding system last? It is a thing but of modern invention and has not yet continued beyond the life of a man; yet in that short space it has so far accumulated, that, together with the current expenses, it requires an amount of taxes at least equal to the whole landed rental of the nation in acres to defray the annual expenditures. That a government could not always have gone on by the same system which has been followed for the last seventy years, must be evident to every man; and for the same reason it cannot always go on.

The funding system is not money; neither is it, properly speaking, credit. It, in effect, creates upon paper the sum which it appears to borrow, and lays on a tax to keep the imaginary capital alive by the payment of interest, and sends the annuity to market to be sold for paper already in circulation. If any credit is given, it is to the disposition of the people to pay the tax, and not to the government which lays it on. When this disposition expires, what is supposed to be the credit of government expires with it. The instance of France, under the former government, shows that it is impossible to compel the payment of taxes by force when a whole nation is determined to take its stand upon that ground.

Mr. Burke, in his review of the finances of France, states the quantity of gold and silver in France at about eighty-eight millions sterling. In doing this he has, I presume, divided by the difference of exchange, instead of the standard of twenty-four livres to a pound sterling; for M. Neckar's statement, from which Mr. Burke's is taken, is *two thousand two hundred millions of livres*, which is upwards of ninety-one millions and a half sterling. . . .

That the quantity of money in France cannot be under this sum may at once be seen from the state of the French revenue, without referring to the records of the French mint for proofs. The revenue of France prior to the revolution was nearly twenty-four millions sterling; and as paper had then no existence in France, the whole revenue was collected upon gold and silver; and it would have been impossible to have collected such a quantity of revenue upon a less national quantity than M. Neckar has stated. Before the establishment of paper in England, the revenue was about a fourth part of the national amount of gold and silver, as may be known by referring to the revenue prior to King William, and the quantity of money stated to be in the nation at that time, which was nearly as much as it is now.

It can be of no real service to a nation to impose upon itself, or to permit itself to be imposed upon; but the prejudices of some and the imposition of others have always represented France as a nation possessing but little money, whereas the quantity is not only more than four times what the quantity is in England, but is considerably greater on a proportion of numbers. To account for this deficiency on the part of England, some reference should be had to the English system of funding. It operates to multiply paper, and to substitute it in the room of money in various shapes; and the more paper is multiplied, the more opportunities are afforded to export the specie; and it admits of a possibility (by extending it to small notes) of increasing paper, till there is no money left. . . .

Lisbon and Cadiz are the two ports into which (money) gold and silver from South America are imported, and which after-

wards divides and spreads itself over Europe by means of commerce, and increases the quantity of money in all parts of Europe. If, therefore, the amount of the annual importation into Europe can be known, and the relative proportion of the foreign commerce of the several nations by which it is distributed can be ascertained, they give a rule, sufficiently true, to ascertain the quantity of money which ought to be found in any nation at any given time.

M. Neckar shows from the registers of Lisbon and Cadiz that the importation of gold and silver into Europe is five millions sterling annually. He has not taken it on a single year, but on an average of fifteen succeeding years, from 1763 to 1777, both inclusive; in which time the amount was one thousand eight hundred million livres, which is seventy-five millions sterling.

From the commencement of the Hanover succession in 1714, to the time Mr. Chalmers published, is seventy-two years; and the quantity imported into Europe in that time would be three hundred and sixty millions sterling.

If the foreign commerce of Great Britain be stated at a sixth part of what the whole foreign commerce of Europe amounts to (which is probably an inferior estimation to what the gentlemen at the exchange would allow), the proportion which Britain should draw by commerce, of this sum, to keep herself on a proportion with the rest of Europe, would be also a sixth part, which is sixty millions sterling; and if the same allowance for waste and accident be made for England, which M. Neckar makes for France, the quantity remaining after these deductions would be fifty-two millions . . .; instead of which there were but twenty millions, which is forty-six millions below its proportionate quantity.

As the quantity of gold and silver imported into Lisbon and Cadiz is more easily ascertained than that of any commodity imported into England; and as the quantity of money coined at the Tower of London is still more positively known, the leading facts do not admit of a controversy. Either, therefore, the Commerce of England is unproductive of profit, or the gold

and silver which it brings in, leak continually away by unseen means at the average rate of about three quarters of a million a year, which in the course of seventy-two years accounts for the deficiency; and its absence is supplied by paper.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Whether the English commerce does not bring in money, or whether the government sends it out after it is brought in, is a matter which the parties concerned can best explain; but that the deficiency exists is not in the power of either to disprove. While Dr. Price, Mr. Eden (now Auckland), Mr. Chalmers, and others were debating whether the quantity of money was greater or less than at the revolution, the circumstance was not adverted to that since the revolution there cannot have been less than four hundred millions sterling imported into Europe; and therefore the quantity in England ought at least to have been four times greater than it was at the revolution, to be on a proportion with Europe. What England is now doing by paper is what she should have been able to do by solid money, if gold and silver had come into the nation in the proportion it ought, or had not been sent out; and she is endeavoring to restore by paper, the balance she has lost by money. It is certain that the gold and silver which arrive annually in the register-ships to Spain and Portugal do not remain in those countries. Taking the value half in gold and half in silver, it is about four hundred tons annually; and from the number of ships and galleons employed in the trade of bringing those metals from South America to Portugal and Spain, the quantity sufficiently proves itself, without referring to the registers.

In the situation England now is, it is impossible she can increase in money. High taxes not only lessen the property of the individuals, but they lessen also the money capital of the nation, by inducing smuggling, which can only be carried on by gold and silver. By the politics which the British government have carried on with the inland powers of Germany and the continent, it has made an enemy of all the maritime powers, and is therefore obliged to keep up a large navy; but though the navy is built in England, the naval stores must be purchased from abroad, and that from countries where the greatest part must be paid for in gold and silver. Some fallacious rumors have been set afloat in England to induce a belief of money, and, among others, that of the French refugees bringing great quantities. The idea is ridiculous. The general part of the money in France is silver; and it would take upwards of twenty of the largest broad-wheel wagons, with ten horses each, to remove one million sterling of silver. Is it then to be supposed that a few people fleeing on horseback or in post-chaises, in a secret manner, and having the French custom-house to pass, and the sea to cross, could bring even a sufficiency for their own expenses?

The revolution of France is attended with many novel circumstances, not only in the political sphere, but in the circle of money transactions. Among others, it shows that a government may be in a state of insolvency, and a nation rich. So far as the fact is confined to the late government of France, it was insolvent; because the nation would no longer support its extravagance, and therefore it could no longer support itself—but with respect to the nation all the means existed. A government may be said to be insolvent every time it applies to a nation to discharge its arrears. The insolvency of the late government of France, and the present government of England, differed in no other respect than as the disposition of the people differ. The people of France refused their aid to the old government, and the people of England submit to taxation without inquiry. What is called the crown in England has been insolvent several times; the last of which, publicly known, was in May, 1777, when it applied to the nation to discharge upwards of £600,000 private debts, which otherwise it could not pay.

It was the error of Mr. Pitt, Mr. Burke, and all those who were unacquainted with the affairs of France to confound the French nation with the French government. The French nation, in effect, endeavored to render the late government insolvent, for the purpose of taking government into its own hands; and it reserved its means for the support of the new government. In a country of such vast extent and population as France, the natural means cannot be wanting; and the political means appear the instant the nation is disposed to permit them. When Mr. Burke, in a speech last winter in the British parliament, *cast his eyes over*

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When millions of money are spoken of, it should be recollected, that such sums can only accumulate in a country by slow degrees and a long procession of time. The most frugal system that England could now adopt would not recover in a century the balance she has lost in money since the commencement of the Hanover succession. She is seventy millions behind France, and she must be, in some considerable proportion, behind every country in Europe, because the returns of the English mint do not show an increase of money, while the registers of Lisbon and Cadiz show a European increase of between three and four hundred millions sterling. [Paine's note.]

*the map of Europe, and saw a chasm that once was France,* he talked like a dreamer of dreams. The same natural France existed as before, and all the natural means existed with it. The only chasm was that which the extinction of despotism had left, and which was to be filled up with a constitution more formidable in resources than the power which had expired.

Although the French nation rendered the late government insolvent, it did not permit the insolvency to act towards the creditors; and the creditors, considering the nation as the real paymaster and the government only as the agent, rested themselves on the nation in preference to the government. This appears greatly to disturb Mr. Burke, as the precedent is fatal to the policy by which governments have supposed themselves secure. They have contracted debts with a view of attaching what is called the moneyed interest of a nation to their support; but the example in France shows that the permanent security of the creditor is in the nation, and not in the government; and that in all possible revolutions that may happen in governments, the means are always with the nation, and the nation always in existence. Mr. Burke argues that the creditors ought to have abided the fate of the government which they trusted; but the national assembly considered them as the creditors of the nation, not of the government—of the master, and not of the steward.

Notwithstanding the late government could not discharge the current expenses, the present government has paid off a great part of the capital. This has been accomplished by two means; the one by lessening the expenses of government, and the other by the sale of the monastic and ecclesiastical landed estates. The devotees and penitent debauchees, extortioners and misers of former days, to ensure themselves a better world than that they were about to leave, had bequeathed immense property in trust to the priesthood for *pious uses*; and the priesthood kept it for themselves. The national assembly has ordered it to be sold for the good of the whole nation, and the priesthood to be decently provided for.

In consequence of the revolution, the annual interest of the debt of France will be reduced at least six millions sterling, by paying off upwards of one hundred millions of the capital; which, with lessening the former expenses of government at least three millions, will place France in a situation worthy the imitation of Europe.

Upon a whole review of the subject, how vast is the contrast! While Mr. Burke has been talking of a general bankruptcy in France, the national assembly have been paying off the capital of the national debt; and while taxes have increased nearly a million a year in England, they have lowered several millions a year in France. Not a word has either Mr. Burke or Mr. Pitt said about French affairs, or the state of the French finances, in the present session of parliament. The subject begins to be too well understood, and imposition serves no longer.

There is a general enigma running through the whole of Mr. Burke's book. He writes in a rage against the national assembly: but what is he enraged about? If his assertions were as true as they are groundless, and if France, by her revolution, had annihilated her power and become what he calls a *chasm*, it might excite the grief of a Frenchman (considering himself as a national man), and provoke his rage against the national assembly; but why should it excite the rage of Mr. Burke? Alas! it is not the nation of France that Mr. Burke means, but the *court*; and every court in Europe, dreading the same fate, is in mourning. He writes neither in the character of a Frenchman nor an Englishman, but in the fawning character of that creature, known in all countries as a friend to none, a *courtier*. Whether it be the court of Versailles, or the court of St. James, or of Carlton House, or the court in expectation, signifies not; for the caterpillar principles of all courts and courtiers are alike. They form a common policy throughout Europe, detached and separate from the interest of the nations, and while they appear to quarrel, they agree to plunder. Nothing can be more terrible to a court or courtier than the revolution of France. That which is a blessing to nations, is bitterness to them; and,

as their existence depends on the duplicity of a country, they tremble at the approach of principles, and dread the precedent that threatens their overthrow.

#### CONCLUSION [TO PART I]

Reason and ignorance, the opposites of each other, influence the great bulk of mankind. If either of these can be rendered sufficiently extensive in a country, the machinery of government goes easily on. Reason shows itself, and ignorance submits to whatever is dictated to it.

The two modes of government which prevail in the world, are, 1st, government by election and representation; 2d, government by hereditary succession. The former is generally known by the name of republic; the latter by that of monarchy and aristocracy.

Those two distinct and opposite forms erect themselves on the two distinct and opposite bases of reason and ignorance. As the exercise of government requires talents and abilities, and as talents and abilities cannot have hereditary descent, it is evident that hereditary succession requires a belief from man to which his reason cannot subscribe, and which can only be established upon his ignorance; and the more ignorant any country is, the better it is fitted for this species of government.

On the contrary, government in a well-constituted republic, requires no belief from man beyond what his reason authorizes. He sees the *rationale* of the whole system, its origin and its operation; and as it is best supported when best understood, the human faculties act with boldness and acquire, under this form of government, a gigantic manliness.

As, therefore, each of those forms acts on a different basis, the one moving freely by the aid of reason, the other by ignorance; we have next to consider what it is that gives motion to that species of government which is called mixed government, or, as it is sometimes ludicrously styled, a government of *this, that, and t'other*.

The moving power in this species of government is, of necessity, corruption. However imperfect election and representa-

tion may be in mixed governments, they still give exertion to a greater portion of reason than is convenient to the hereditary part; and therefore it becomes necessary to buy the reason up. A mixed government is an imperfect everything, cementing and soldering the discordant parts together by corruption, to act as a whole. Mr. Burke appears highly disgusted that France, since she had resolved on a revolution, did not adopt what he calls "a British constitution"; and the regret which he expresses on this occasion implies a suspicion that the British constitution needed something to keep its defects in countenance.

In mixed governments there is no responsibility; the parts cover each other till responsibility is lost; and the corruption which moves the machine contrives at the same time its own escape. When it is laid down as a maxim that *a king can do no wrong*, it places him in a state of similar security with that of idiots and persons insane, and responsibility is out of the question with respect to himself. It then descends upon the minister who shelters himself under a majority in parliament which, by places, pensions, and corruption, he can always command; and that majority justifies itself by the same authority with which it protects the minister. In this rotatory motion, responsibility is thrown off from the parts and from the whole.

When there is a part in a government which can do no wrong, it implies that it does nothing; and is only the machine of another power, by whose advice and direction it acts. What is supposed to be the king, in mixed governments, is the cabinet; and as the cabinet is always a part of the parliament, and the members justifying in one character what they act in another, a mixed government becomes a continual enigma; entailing upon a country, by the quantity of corruption necessary to solder the parts, the expense of supporting all the forms of government at once, and finally resolving itself into a government by committee; in which the advisers, the actors, the approvers, the justifiers, the persons responsible, and the persons not responsible, are the same persons.

By this pantomimical contrivance and change of scene and character, the parts help each other out in matters which neither

of them singly would presume to act. When money is to be obtained, the mass of variety apparently dissolves, and a profusion of parliamentary praises passes between the parts. Each admires, with astonishment, the wisdom, the liberality, and disinterestedness of the other; and all of them breathe a pitying sigh at the burdens of the nation.

But in a well-conditioned republic, nothing of this soldering, praising, and pitying, can take place; the representation being equal throughout the country and complete in itself, however it may be arranged into legislative and executive, they have all one and the same natural source. The parts are not foreigners to each other, like democracy, aristocracy, and monarchy. As there are no discordant distinctions, there is nothing to corrupt by compromise or confound by contrivance. Public measures appeal of themselves to the understanding of the nation, and resting on their own merits, disown any flattering application to vanity. The continual whine of lamenting the burden of taxes, however successfully it may be practiced in mixed governments, is inconsistent with the sense and spirit of a republic. If taxes are necessary, they are of course advantageous; but if they require an apology, the apology itself implies an impeachment. Why then is man thus imposed upon, or why does he impose upon himself?

When men are spoken of as kings and subjects, or when government is mentioned under distinct or combined heads of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy, what is it that *reasoning* man is to understand by the terms? If there really existed in the world two more distinct and separate *elements* of human power, we should then see the several origins to which those terms would descriptively apply: but as there is but one species of man, there can be but one element of human power, and that element is man himself. Monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy are but creatures of imagination; and a thousand such may be contrived as well as three.

From the revolutions of America and France and the symptoms that have appeared in other countries, it is evident that the

opinion of the world is changing with respect to systems of government, and that revolutions are not within the compass of political calculations. The progress of time and circumstances, which men assign to the accomplishment of great changes, is too mechanical to measure the force of the mind and the rapidity of reflection by which revolutions are generated; all the old governments have received a shock from those that already appear, and which were once more improbable, and are a greater subject of wonder, than a general revolution in Europe would be now.

When we survey the wretched condition of man under the monarchical and hereditary systems of government, dragged from his home by one power, or driven by another, and impoverished by taxes more than by enemies, it becomes evident that those systems are bad, and that a general revolution in the principle and construction of governments is necessary.

What is government more than the management of the affairs of a nation? It is not, and from its nature cannot be, the property of any particular man or family, but of the whole community at whose expense it is supported; and though by force or contrivance it has been usurped into an inheritance, the usurpation cannot alter the right of things. Sovereignty, as a matter of right, appertains to the nation only and not to any individual; and a nation has at all times an inherent, indefeasible right to abolish any form of government it finds inconvenient, and establish such as accords with its interest, disposition, and happiness. The romantic and barbarous distinctions of men into kings and subjects, though it may suit the condition of courtiers cannot that of citizens; and is exploded by the principle upon which governments are now founded. Every citizen is a member of the sovereignty, and as such can acknowledge no personal subjection; and his obedience can be only to the laws.

When men think of what government is, they must necessarily suppose it to possess a knowledge of all the objects and matters upon which its authority is to be exercised. In this view of government, the republican system, as established by America and France, operates to embrace the whole of a nation; and the knowledge necessary to the interest of all the parts is to

be found in the center, which the parts by representation form: but the old governments are on a construction that excludes knowledge as well as happiness; government by monks, who know nothing of the world beyond the walls of a convent, is as consistent as government by kings.

What were formerly called revolutions were little more than a change of persons or an alteration of local circumstances. They rose and fell like things of course, and had nothing in their existence or their fate that could influence beyond the spot that produced them. But what we now see in the world, from the revolutions of America and France, are a renovation of the natural order of things, a system of principles as universal as truth and the existence of man, and combining moral with political happiness and national prosperity.

"I. Men are born and always continue free and equal in respect to their rights. Civil distinctions, therefore, can be founded only on public utility.

"II. The end of all political associations is the preservation of the natural and imprescriptible rights of man, and these rights are liberty, property, security and resistance of oppression.

"III. The nation is essentially the source of all sovereignty; nor can any individual, or any body of men, be entitled to any authority which is not expressly derived from it."

In these principles there is nothing to throw a nation into confusion by inflaming ambition. They are calculated to call forth wisdom and abilities, and to exercise them for the public good and not for the emolument or aggrandizement of particular descriptions of men or families. Monarchical sovereignty, the enemy of mankind and the source of misery, is abolished; and sovereignty itself is restored to its natural and original place, the nation. Were this the case throughout Europe, the cause of wars would be taken away.

It is attributed to Henry IV of France, a man of an enlarged and benevolent heart, that he proposed about the year 1620 a plan for abolishing war in Europe. The plan consisted in constituting a European congress or, as the French authors style it, a pacific republic; by appointing delegates from the several

nations, who were to act as a court of arbitration in any disputes that might arise between nation and nation.

Had such a plan been adopted at the time it was proposed, the taxes of England and France, as two of the parties, would have been at least ten millions sterling annually, to each nation, less than they were at the commencement of the French revolution.

To conceive a cause why such a plan has not been adopted (and that instead of a congress for the purpose of preventing war, it has been called only to *terminate* a war after a fruitless expense of several years) it will be necessary to consider the interest of governments as a distinct interest to that of nations.

Whatever is the cause of taxes to a nation becomes also the means of revenue to a government. Every war terminates with an addition of taxes, and consequently with an addition of revenue; and in any event of war, in the manner they are now commenced and concluded, the power and interest of governments are increased. War, therefore, from its productiveness, as it easily furnishes the pretense of necessity for taxes and appointments to places and offices, becomes the principal part of the system of old governments; and to establish any mode to abolish war, however advantageous it might be to nations, would be to take from such government the most lucrative of its branches. The frivolous matters upon which war is made show the disposition and avidity of governments to uphold the system of war, and betray the motives upon which they act.

Why are not republics plunged into war, but because the nature of their government does not admit of an interest distinct from that of the nation? Even Holland, though an ill-constructed republic, and with a commerce extending over the world, existed nearly a century without war; and the instant the form of government was changed in France, the republican principles of peace and domestic prosperity and economy arose with the new government; and the same consequences would follow the same causes in other nations.

As war is the system of government on the old construction, the animosity which nations reciprocally entertain, is nothing more than what the policy of their governments excite to keep

up the spirit of the system. Each government accuses the other of perfidy, intrigue, and ambition as a means of heating the imagination of their respective nations, and incensing them to hostilities. Man is not the enemy of man, but through the medium of a false system of government. Instead therefore of exclaiming against the ambition of kings, the exclamation should be directed against the principle of such governments; and instead of seeking to reform the individual, the wisdom of a nation should apply itself to reform the system.

¶ Whether the forms and maxims of governments which are still in practice were adapted to the condition of the world at the period they were established is not in this case the question. The older they are the less correspondence can they have with the present state of things. Time and change of circumstances and opinions have the same progressive effect in rendering modes of government obsolete, as they have upon customs and manners. Agriculture, commerce, manufactures, and the tranquil arts, by which the prosperity of nations is best promoted, require a different system of government and a different species of knowledge to direct its operations, to what might have been the former condition of the world.

As it is not difficult to perceive, from the enlightened state of mankind, that hereditary governments are verging to their decline and that revolutions on the broad basis of national sovereignty, and government by representation, are making their way in Europe, it would be an act of wisdom to anticipate their approach and produce revolutions by reason and accommodation, rather than commit them to the issue of convulsions.

From what we now see, nothing of reform in the political world ought to be held improbable. It is an age of revolutions in which everything may be looked for. The intrigue of courts, by which the system of war is kept up, may provoke a confederation of nations to abolish it; and a European congress to patronize the progress of free government and promote the civilization of nations with each other is an event nearer in probability than once were the revolutions and alliance of France and America.

## PART II

## COMBINING PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE

## [DEDICATION]

TO M. DE LA FAYETTE

After an acquaintance of nearly fifteen years in difficult situations in America and various consultations in Europe, I feel a pleasure in presenting you this small treatise in gratitude for your services to my beloved America, and as a testimony of my esteem for the virtues, public and private, which I know you to possess.

The only point upon which I could ever discover that we differed was not as to principles of government, but as to time. For my own part, I think it equally as injurious to good principles to permit them to linger as to push them on too fast. That which you suppose accomplishable in fourteen or fifteen years, I may believe practicable in a much shorter period. Mankind, as it appears to me, are always ripe enough to understand their true interest, provided it be presented clearly to their understanding, and that in a manner not to create suspicion by anything like self-design, nor to offend by assuming too much. Where we would wish to reform we must not reproach.

When the American Revolution was established I felt a disposition to sit serenely down and enjoy the calm. It did not appear to me that any object could afterwards arise great enough to make me quit tranquillity and feel as I had felt before. But when principle, and not place, is the energetic cause of action, a man, I find, is everywhere the same.

I am now once more in the public world; and as I have not a right to contemplate on so many years of remaining life as you have, I am resolved to labor as fast as I can; and as I am anxious for your aid and your company, I wish you to hasten your principles and overtake me.

If you make a campaign the ensuing spring, which it is most probable there will be no occasion for, I will come and join you.

Should the campaign commence, I hope it will terminate in the extinction of German despotism and in establishing the freedom of all Germany. When France shall be surrounded with revolutions, she will be in peace and safety and her taxes, as well as those of Germany, will consequently become less.

Your sincere,

Affectionate friend,

THOMAS PAINE

*London, Feb. 9, 1792*

#### PREFACE

When I began the chapter entitled the *Conclusion*, in the former part of *The Rights of Man*, published last year, it was my intention to have extended it to a greater length; but in casting the whole matter in my mind which I wished to add, I found that I must either make the work too bulky or contract my plan too much. I therefore brought it to a close as soon as the subject would admit, and reserved what I had further to say to another opportunity.

Several other reasons contributed to produce this determination. I wished to know the manner in which a work, written in a style of thinking and expression at variance with what had been customary in England, would be received before I proceeded further. A great field was opening to the view of mankind by means of the French revolution. Mr. Burke's outrageous opposition thereto brought the controversy into England. He attacked principles which he knew (from information) I would contest with him, because they are principles I believe to be good and which I have contributed to establish and conceive myself bound to defend. Had he not urged the controversy, I had most probably been a silent man.

Another reason for deferring the remainder of the work was that Mr. Burke promised in his first publication to renew the subject at another opportunity and to make a comparison of what he called the English and French constitutions. I there-

fore held myself in reserve for him. He has published two works since without doing this; which he certainly would not have omitted had the comparison been in his favor.

In his last work, his "Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs," he has quoted about ten pages from *The Rights of Man*, and having given himself the trouble of doing this, says, "he shall not attempt in the smallest degree to refute them," meaning the principles therein contained. I am enough acquainted with Mr. Burke to know that he would if he could. But instead of contesting them, he immediately after consoles himself with saying that "he has done his part." He has not done his part. He has not performed his promise of a comparison of constitutions. He started a controversy, he gave the challenge, and has fled from it; and he is now a *case in point* with his own opinion that "*the age of chivalry is gone!*"

The title, as well as the substance of his last work, his Appeal, is his condemnation. Principles must rest on their own merits, and if they are good they certainly will. To put them under the shelter of other men's authority, as Mr. Burke has done, serves to bring them into suspicion. Mr. Burke is not very fond of dividing his honors, but in this case he is artfully dividing the disgrace.

But who are those to whom Mr. Burke has appealed? A set of childish thinkers and half-way politicians born in the last century; men who went no further with any principle than as it suited their purpose as a party; the nation sees nothing in such works or such politics worthy its attention. A little matter will move a party, but it must be something great that moves a nation.

Though I see nothing in Mr. Burke's Appeal worth taking notice of, there is, however, one expression upon which I shall offer a few remarks.—After quoting largely from the *Rights of Man*, and declining to contest the principles contained in that work, he says, "This will most probably be done (*if such writings shall be thought to deserve any other refutation than that of criminal justice*) by others, who may think with Mr. Burke and with the same zeal."

In the first place, it has not been done by anybody. Not less, I believe, than eight or ten pamphlets, intended as answers to the former part of the *Rights of Man* have been published by different persons, and not one of them, to my knowledge, has extended to a second edition, nor are even the titles of them so much as generally remembered. As I am averse to unnecessarily multiplying publications, I have answered none of them. And as I believe that a man may write himself out of reputation when nobody else can do it, I am careful to avoid that rock.

But as I decline unnecessary publications on the one hand, so would I avoid anything that looked like sullen pride on the other. If Mr. Burke, or any person on his side the question, will produce an answer to the *Rights of Man* that shall extend to a half or even a fourth part of the number of copies to which the *Rights of Man* extended, I will reply to his work. But until this be done, I shall so far take the sense of the public for my guide (and the world knows I am not a flatterer) that what they do not think worth while to read, is not worth mine to answer. I suppose the number of copies to which the first part of the *Rights of Man* extended, taking England, Scotland, and Ireland, is not less than between forty and fifty thousand.

I now come to remark on the remaining part of the quotation I have made from Mr. Burke.

"If," says he, "such writings shall be thought to deserve any other refutation than that of *criminal* justice."

Pardoning the pun, it must be *criminal* justice indeed that should condemn a work as a substitute for not being able to refute it. The greatest condemnation that could be passed upon it would be a refutation. But, in proceeding by the method Mr. Burke alludes to, the condemnation would in the final event pass upon the criminality of the process and not upon the work, and in this case I had rather be the author than be either the judge or the jury that should condemn it.

But to come at once to the point. I have differed from some professional gentlemen on the subject of prosecutions, and I since find they are falling into my opinion, which I shall here state as fully, but as concisely as I can.

I will first put a case with respect to any law, and then compare it with a government, or with what in England is, or has been, called a constitution.

It would be an act of despotism, or what in England is called arbitrary power, to make a law to prohibit investigating the principles, good or bad, on which such a law or any other is founded.

If a law be bad, it is one thing to oppose the practice of it, but it is quite a different thing to expose its errors, to reason on its defects, and to show cause why it should be repealed, or why another ought to be substituted in its place. I have always held it an opinion (making it also my practice) that it is better to obey a bad law, making use at the same time of every argument to show its errors and procure its repeal, than forcibly to violate it; because the precedent of breaking a bad law might weaken the force, and lead to a discretionary violation, of those which are good.

The case is the same with respect to principles and forms of government, or to what are called constitutions, and the parts of which they are composed.

It is for the good of nations and not for the emolument or aggrandizement of particular individuals that government ought to be established, and that mankind are at the expense of supporting it. The defects of every government and constitution both as to principle and form, must, on a parity of reasoning, be as open to discussion as the defects of a law, and it is a duty which every man owes to society to point them out. When those defects and the means of remedying them are generally seen by a nation, that nation will reform its government or its constitution in the one case, as the government repealed or reformed the law in the other. The operation of government is restricted to the making and the administering of laws; but it is to a nation that the rights of forming or reforming, generating or regenerating constitutions and governments belong; and consequently those subjects, as subjects of investigation, are always before a country *as a matter of right*, and cannot, without invading the general rights of that country, be made subjects for

prosecution. On this ground I will meet Mr. Burke whenever he pleases. It is better that the whole argument should come out than to seek to stifle it. It was himself that opened the controversy, and he ought not to desert it.

I do not believe that monarchy and aristocracy will continue seven years longer in any of the enlightened countries of Europe. If better reasons can be shown for them than against them, they will stand; if the contrary, they will not. Mankind are not now to be told they shall not think, or they shall not read: and publications that go no further than to investigate principles of government, to invite men to reason and to reflect, and to show the errors and excellencies of different systems, have a right to appear. If they do not excite attention, they are not worth the trouble of a prosecution; and if they do the prosecution will amount to nothing, since it cannot amount to a prohibition of reading. This would be a sentence on the public, instead of the author, and would also be the most effectual mode of making or hastening revolutions.

On all cases that apply universally to a nation, with respect to systems of government, a jury of *twelve* men is not competent to decide. Where there are no witnesses to be examined, no facts to be proved, and where the whole matter is before the whole public, and the merits or demerits of it resting on their opinion; and where there is nothing to be known in a court, but what everybody knows out of it, every twelve men are equally as good a jury as the other and would most probably reverse each other's verdict; or from the variety of their opinions, not be able to form one. It is one case whether a nation approve a work or a plan; but it is quite another case whether it will commit to any such jury the power of determining whether that nation has a right to, or shall reform its government, or not. I mention these cases that Mr. Burke may see I have not written on government without reflecting on what is law, as well as on what are rights. The only effectual jury in such cases would be a convention of the whole nation fairly elected; for in all such cases the whole nation is the vicinage.

As to the prejudices which men have from education and

habit in favor of any particular form or system of government, those prejudices have yet to stand the test of reason and reflection. In fact such prejudices are nothing. No man is prejudiced in favor of a thing knowing it to be wrong. He is attached to it on the belief of its being right; and when he sees it is not so, the prejudice will be gone. We have but a defective idea of what prejudice is. It might be said that until men think for themselves the whole is prejudice and *not opinion*; for that only is opinion which is the result of reason and reflection. I offer this remark, that Mr. Burke may not confide too much in what has been the customary prejudices of the country.

But admitting governments to be changed all over Europe, it certainly may be done without convulsion or revenge. It is not worth making changes or revolutions, unless it be for some great national benefit, and when this shall appear to a nation the danger will be, as in America and France, to those who oppose; and with this reflection I close my preface.

THOMAS PAINE

*London, Feb. 9, 1792*

## INTRODUCTION

What Archimedes said of the mechanical powers, may be applied to reason and liberty: "*Had we,*" said he, "*a place to stand upon, we might raise the world.*"

The revolution in America presented in politics what was only theory in mechanics. So deeply rooted were all the governments of the old world, and so effectually had the tyranny and the antiquity of habit established itself over the mind, that no beginning could be made in Asia, Africa, or Europe, to reform the political condition of man. Freedom had been hunted round the globe; reason was considered as rebellion; and the slavery of fear had made men afraid to think.

But such is the irresistible nature of truth that all it asks, and all it wants, is the liberty of appearing. The sun needs no inscription to distinguish him from darkness, and no sooner did the

American governments display themselves to the world than despotism felt a shock and man began to contemplate redress.

The independence of America, considered merely as a separation from England, would have been a matter but of little importance had it not been accompanied by a revolution in the principles and practice of government. She made a stand, not for herself only, but for the world, and looked beyond the advantages which *she* could receive. Even the Hessian, though hired to fight against her, may live to bless his defeat; and England, condemning the viciousness of its government, rejoice in its miscarriage.

As America was the only spot in the political world where the principles of universal reformation could begin, so also was it the best in the natural world. An assemblage of circumstances conspired not only to give birth but to add gigantic maturity to its principles. The scene which that country presents to the eye of the spectator has something in it which generates and enlarges great ideas. Nature appears to him in magnitude. The mighty objects he beholds act upon his mind by enlarging it, and he partakes of the greatness he contemplates. Its first settlers were emigrants from different European nations, and of diversified professions of religion, retiring from the governmental persecutions of the old world, and meeting in the new not as enemies but as brothers. The wants which necessarily accompany the cultivation of a wilderness produced among them a state of society which countries long harassed by the quarrels and intrigues of governments had neglected to cherish. In such a situation man becomes what he ought to be. He sees his species not with the inhuman idea of a natural enemy but as kindred; and the example shows to the artificial world that man must go back to nature for information.

From the rapid progress which America makes in every species of improvement, it is rational to conclude that if the governments of Asia, Africa and Europe had begun on a principle similar to that of America, or had they not been very early corrupted therefrom, those countries must by this time have been in a far superior condition to what they are. Age after

age has passed away for no other purpose than to behold their wretchedness. Could we suppose a spectator who knew nothing of the world and who was put into it merely to make his observations, he would take a great part of the old world to be new, just struggling with the difficulties and hardships of an infant settlement. He could not suppose that the hordes of miserable poor, with which old countries abound, could be any other than those who had not yet been able to provide for themselves. Little would he think they were the consequence of what in such countries is called government.

If, from the more wretched parts of the old world, we look at those which are in an advanced state of improvement, we still find the greedy hand of government thrusting itself into every corner and crevice of industry, and grasping the spoil of the multitude. Invention is continually exercised to furnish new pretenses for revenue and taxation. It watches prosperity as its prey, and permits none to escape without a tribute.

As revolutions have begun (and as the probability is always greater against a thing beginning, than of proceeding after it has begun), it is natural to expect that other revolutions will follow. The amazing and still increasing expenses with which old governments are conducted, the numerous wars they engage in or provoke, the embarrassments they throw in the way of universal civilization and commerce, and the oppression and usurpation acted at home, have wearied out the patience and exhausted the property of the world. In such a situation, and with such examples already existing, revolutions are to be looked for. They are become subjects of universal conversation, and may be considered as the *order of the day*.

If systems of government can be introduced less expensive and more productive of general happiness than those which have existed, all attempts to oppose their progress will in the end prove fruitless. Reason, like time, will make its own way, and prejudice will fall in the combat with interest. If universal peace, harmony, civilization, and commerce are ever to be the happy lot of man, it cannot be accomplished but by a revolution in the present system of governments. All the monarchical

governments are military. War is their trade, plunder and revenue their objects. While such governments continue, peace has not the absolute security of a day. What is the history of all monarchical governments but a disgusting picture of human wretchedness, and the accidental respite of a few years repose? Wearied with war, and tired with human butchery, they sat down to rest and called it peace. This certainly is not the condition that heaven intended for man; and if *this be monarchy*, well might monarchy be reckoned among the sins of the Jews.

The revolutions which formerly took place in the world had nothing in them that interested the bulk of mankind. They extended only to a change of persons and measures but not of principles, and rose or fell among the common transactions of the moment. What we now behold may not improperly be called a "*counter revolution*." Conquest and tyranny, at some early period, dispossessed man of his rights, and he is now recovering them. And as the tide of human affairs has its ebb and flow in directions contrary to each other, so also is it in this. Government founded on a *moral theory, on a system of universal peace, on the indefeasible, hereditary rights of man*, is now revolving from west to east by a stronger impulse than the government of the sword revolved from east to west. It interests not particular individuals but nations in its progress, and promises a new era to the human race.

The danger to which the success of revolutions is most exposed is that of attempting them before the principles on which they proceed, and the advantages to result from them, are sufficiently understood. Almost everything appertaining to the circumstances of a nation has been absorbed and confounded under the general and mysterious word *government*. Though it avoids taking to its account the errors it commits and the mischiefs it occasions, it fails not to arrogate to itself whatever has the appearance of prosperity. It robs industry of its honors by pedantically making itself the cause of its effects; and purloins from the general character of man the merits that appertain to him as a social being.

It may therefore be of use, in this day of revolutions, to discriminate between those things which are the effect of government, and those which are not. This will best be done by taking a review of society and civilization, and the consequences resulting therefrom, as things distinct from what are called governments. By beginning with this investigation, we shall be able to assign effects to their proper causes, and analyze the mass of common errors.

## CHAPTER I. OF SOCIETY AND CIVILIZATION

A great part of that order which reigns among mankind is not the effect of government. It had its origin in the principles of society and the natural constitution of man. It existed prior to government, and would exist if the formality of government was abolished. The mutual dependence and reciprocal interest which man has in man, and all the parts of a civilized community upon each other, create that great chain of connection which holds it together. The landholder, the farmer, the manufacturer, the merchant, the tradesman, and every occupation prospers by the aid which each receives from the other, and from the whole. Common interest regulates their concerns and forms their laws; and the laws which common usage ordains have a greater influence than the laws of government. In fine, society performs for itself almost everything which is ascribed to government.

To understand the nature and quantity of government proper for man, it is necessary to attend to his character. As nature created him for social life, she fitted him for the station she intended. In all cases she made his natural wants greater than his individual powers. No one man is capable, without the aid of society, of supplying his own wants; and those wants, acting upon every individual, impel the whole of them into society as naturally as gravitation acts to a center.

But she has gone further. She has not only forced man into society by a diversity of wants, which the reciprocal aid of each other can supply, but she has implanted in him a system of

social affections, which, though not necessary to his existence, are essential to his happiness. There is no period in life when this love for society ceases to act. It begins and ends with our being.

If we examine with attention into the composition and constitution of man, the diversity of his wants, and the diversity of talents in different men for reciprocally accommodating the wants of each other, his propensity to society, and consequently to preserve the advantages resulting from it, we shall easily discover that a great part of what is called government is mere imposition.

Government is no further necessary than to supply the few cases to which society and civilization are not conveniently competent; and instances are not wanting to show that everything which government can usefully add thereto, has been performed by the common consent of society, without government.

For upwards of two years from the commencement of the American war, and a longer period in several of the American states, there were no established forms of government. The old governments had been abolished, and the country was too much occupied in defense to employ its attention in establishing new governments; yet during this interval order and harmony were preserved as inviolate as in any country in Europe. There is a natural aptness in man, and more so in society, because it embraces a greater variety of abilities and resources to accommodate itself to whatever situation it is in. The instant formal government is abolished, society begins to act. A general association takes place, and common interest produces common security.

So far is it from being true, as has been pretended, that the abolition of any formal government is the dissolution of society, it acts by a contrary impulse, and brings the latter the closer together. All that part of its organization which it had committed to its government devolves again upon itself, and acts through its medium. When men, as well from natural instinct as from reciprocal benefits, have habituated themselves

to social and civilized life, there is always enough of its principles in practice to carry them through any changes they may find necessary or convenient to make in their government. In short, man is so naturally a creature of society, that it is almost impossible to put him out of it.

Formal government makes but a small part of civilized life; and when even the best that human wisdom can devise is established, it is a thing more in name and idea than in fact. It is to the great and fundamental principles of society and civilization—to the common usage universally consented to, and mutually and reciprocally maintained—to the unceasing circulation of interest, which, passing through its innumerable channels, invigorates the whole mass of civilized man—it is to these things, infinitely more than to anything which even the best instituted government can perform, that the safety and prosperity of the individual and of the whole depends.

The more perfect civilization is, the less occasion has it for government, because the more does it regulate its own affairs and govern itself; but so contrary is the practice of old governments to the reason of the case, that the expenses of them increase in the proportion they ought to diminish. It is but few general laws that civilized life requires, and those of such common usefulness, that whether they are enforced by the forms of government or not, the effect will be nearly the same. If we consider what the principles are that first condense men into society, and what the motives that regulate their mutual intercourse afterwards, we shall find, by the time we arrive at what is called government, that nearly the whole of the business is performed by the natural operation of the parts upon each other.

Man, with respect to all those matters, is more a creature of consistency than he is aware of, or than governments would wish him to believe. All the great laws of society are laws of nature. Those of trade and commerce, whether with respect to the intercourse of individuals or of nations, are laws of mutual and reciprocal interest. They are followed and obeyed, because it is the interest of the parties so to do, and not on

account of any formal laws their governments may impose or interpose.

But how often is the natural propensity to society disturbed or destroyed by the operations of government! When the latter, instead of being ingrafted on the principles of the former, assumes to exist for itself, and acts by partialities of favor and oppression, it becomes the cause of the mischiefs it ought to prevent.

If we look back to the riots and tumults which at various times have happened in England, we shall find, that they did not proceed from the want of a government, but that government was itself the generating cause; instead of consolidating society, it divided it; it deprived it of its natural cohesion, and engendered discontents and disorders, which otherwise would not have existed. In those associations which men promiscuously form for the purpose of trade, or of any concern in which government is totally out of the question and in which they act merely on the principles of society, we see how naturally the various parties unite; and this shows, by comparison, that governments, so far from being always the cause or means of order, are often the destruction of it. The riots of 1780 had no other source than the remains of those prejudices which the government itself had encouraged. But with respect to England there are also other causes.

Excess and inequality of taxation, however disguised in the means, never fail to appear in their effect. As a great mass of the community are thrown thereby into poverty and discontent, they are constantly on the brink of commotion; and, deprived as they unfortunately are of the means of information, are easily heated to outrage. Whatever the apparent cause of any riots may be, the real one is always want of happiness. It shows that something is wrong in the system of government, that injures the felicity by which society is to be preserved.

But as fact is superior to reasoning, the instance of America presents itself to confirm these observations. If there is a country in the world, where concord, according to common calculation, would be least expected, it is America. Made up,

as it is, of people from different nations,<sup>1</sup> accustomed to different forms and habits of government, speaking different languages, and more different in their modes of worship, it would appear that the union of such a people was impracticable; but by the simple operation of constructing government on the principles of society and the rights of man, every difficulty retires, and all the parts are brought into cordial unison. There, the poor are not oppressed, the rich are not privileged. Industry is not mortified by the splendid extravagance of a court rioting at its expense. Their taxes are few, because their government is just; and as there is nothing to render them wretched, there is nothing to engender riots and tumults.

A metaphysical man, like Mr. Burke, would have tortured his invention to discover how such a people could be governed. He would have supposed that some must be managed by fraud, others by force, and all by some contrivance; that genius must be hired to impose upon ignorance, and show and parade to fascinate the vulgar. Lost in the abundance of his researches, he would have resolved and re-resolved, and finally overlooked the plain and easy road that lay directly before him.

One of the great advantages of the American revolution has been that it led to a discovery of the principles and laid open the imposition of governments. All the revolutions till then had been worked within the atmosphere of a court, and never on the great floor of a nation. The parties were always of the

<sup>1</sup>That part of America which is generally called New England, including New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut, is peopled chiefly by English descendants. In the state of New York, about half are Dutch, the rest English, Scotch, and Irish. In New Jersey, a mixture of English and Dutch, with some Scotch and Irish. In Pennsylvania, about one third are English, another Germans, and the remainder Scotch and Irish, with some Swedes. The states to the southward have a greater proportion of English than the middle states, but in all of them there is a mixture; and besides those enumerated, there are a considerable number of French, and some few of all the European nations, lying on the coast. The most numerous religious denomination are the Presbyterians; but no one sect is established above another, and all men are equally citizens. [Paine's note.]

class of courtiers; and whatever was their rage for reformation, they carefully preserved the fraud of the profession.

In all cases they took care to represent government as a thing made up of mysteries which only themselves understood: and they hid from the understanding of the nation the only thing that was beneficial to know, namely, *that government is nothing more than a national association acting on the principles of society.*

Having thus endeavored to show that the social and civilized state of man is capable of performing within itself almost everything necessary to its protection and government, it will be proper, on the other hand, to take a review of the present old governments, and examine whether their principles and practice are correspondent thereto.

## CHAPTER II. OF THE ORIGIN OF THE PRESENT OLD GOVERNMENTS

It is impossible that such governments as have hitherto existed in the world could have commenced by any other means than a total violation of every principle, sacred and moral. The obscurity in which the origin of all the present old governments is buried, implies the iniquity and disgrace with which they began. The origin of the present governments of America and France will ever be remembered, because it is honorable to record it; but with respect to the rest, even flattery has consigned them to the tomb of time, without an inscription.

It could have been no difficult thing in the early and solitary ages of the world, while the chief employment of men was that of attending flocks and herds, for a banditti of ruffians to overrun a country, and lay it under contribution. Their power being thus established, the chief of the band contrived to lose the name of robber in that of monarch; and hence the origin of monarchy and kings.

The origin of the government of England, so far as relates to what is called its line of monarchy, being one of the latest, is perhaps the best recorded. The hatred which the Norman

invasion and tyranny begat must have been deeply rooted in the nation to have outlived the contrivance to obliterate it. Though not a courtier will talk of the curfew-bell, not a village in England has forgotten it.

Those bands of robbers having parcelled out the world and divided it into dominions, began, as is naturally the case, to quarrel with each other. What at first was obtained by violence was considered by others as lawful to be taken, and a second plunderer succeeded the first. They alternately invaded the dominions which each had assigned to himself, and the brutality with which they treated each other explains the original character of monarchy. It was ruffian torturing ruffian. The conqueror considered the conquered not as his prisoner, but his property. He led him in triumph rattling in chains, and doomed him, at pleasure, to slavery or death. As time obliterated the history of their beginning, their successors assumed new appearances to cut off the entail of their disgrace, but their principles and objects remained the same. What at first was plunder assumed the softer name of revenue; and the power originally usurped, they affected to inherit.

From such beginning of governments, what could be expected but a continual system of war and extortion? It has established itself into a trade. The vice is not peculiar to one more than to another, but is the common principle of all. There does not exist within such governments a stamina whereon to ingraft reformation; and the shortest and most effectual remedy is to begin anew.

What scenes of horror, what perfection of iniquity, present themselves in contemplating the character and reviewing the history of such governments! If we would delineate human nature with a baseness of heart and hypocrisy of countenance that reflection would shudder at and humanity disown, it is kings, courts, and cabinets, that must sit for the portrait. Man, as he is naturally, with all his faults about him, is not up to the character.

Can we possibly suppose that if government had originated in a right principle, and had not an interest in pursuing a

wrong one, that the world could have been in the wretched and quarrelsome condition we have seen it? What inducement has the farmer, while following the plough, to lay aside his peaceful pursuits and go to war with the farmer of another country? Or what inducement has the manufacturer? What is dominion to them, or to any class of men in a nation? Does it add an acre to any man's estate, or raise its value? Are not conquest and defeat each of the same price, and taxes the never-failing consequence? Though this reasoning may be good to a nation, it is not so to a government. War is the faro-table of governments, and nations the dupes of the game.

If there is anything to wonder at in this miserable scene of governments, more than might be expected, it is the progress which the peaceful arts of agriculture, manufacture, and commerce have made, beneath such a long accumulating load of discouragement and oppression. It serves to show that instinct in animals does not act with stronger impulse than the principles of society and civilization operate in man. Under all discouragements, he pursues his object and yields to nothing but impossibilities.

### CHAPTER III. OF THE OLD AND NEW SYSTEMS OF GOVERNMENT

Nothing can appear more contradictory than the principles on which the old governments began, and the condition to which society, civilization, and commerce, are capable of carrying mankind. Government on the old system is an assumption of power for the aggrandizement of itself; on the new, a delegation of power for the common benefit of society. The former supports itself by keeping up a system of war; the latter promotes a system of peace as the true means of enriching a nation. The one encourages national prejudices; the other promotes universal society as the means of universal commerce. The one measures its prosperity by the quantity of revenue it extorts; the other proves its excellence by the small quantity of taxes it requires.

Mr. Burke has talked of old and new whigs. If he can amuse himself with childish names and distinctions, I shall not interrupt his pleasure. It is not to him, but to the Abbé Sièyes, that I address this chapter. I am already engaged to the latter gentleman to discuss the subject of monarchical government; and as it naturally occurs in comparing the old and new systems, I make this the opportunity of presenting to him my observations. I shall occasionally take Mr. Burke in my way.

Though it might be proved that the system of government now called the *new* is the most ancient in principle of all that have existed, being founded on the original inherent rights of man: yet, as tyranny and the sword have suspended the exercise of those rights for many centuries past, it serves better the purpose of distinction to call it the *new* than to claim the right of calling it the old.

The first general distinction between those two systems is that the one now called the old is *hereditary*, either in whole or in part; and the new is entirely *representative*. It rejects all hereditary government:

1st, As being an imposition on mankind.

2d, As inadequate to the purposes for which government is necessary.

With respect to the first of these heads, it cannot be proved by what right hereditary government could begin; neither does there exist, within the compass of mortal power, a right to establish it. Man has no authority over posterity in matters of personal right; and therefore no man or body of men had, or can have, a right to set up hereditary government. Were even ourselves to come again into existence, instead of being succeeded by posterity, we have not now the right of taking from ourselves the rights which would then be ours. On what ground, then, do we pretend to take them from others?

All hereditary government is in its nature tyranny. A heritable crown, or a heritable throne, or by what other fanciful name such things may be called, have no other significant explanation than that mankind are heritable property.

To inherit a government is to inherit the people, as if they were flocks and herds.

With respect to the second head, that of being inadequate to the purposes for which government is necessary, we have only to consider what government essentially is and compare it with the circumstances to which hereditary succession is subject.

Government ought to be a thing always in full maturity. It ought to be so constructed as to be superior to all the accidents to which individual man is subject; and therefore, hereditary succession, by being *subject to them all*, is the most irregular and imperfect of all the systems of government.

We have heard the *rights of man* called a *leveling* system; but the only system to which the word *leveling* is truly applicable is the hereditary monarchical system. It is a system of *mental leveling*. It indiscriminately admits every species of character to the same authority. Vice and virtue, ignorance and wisdom, in short, every quality, good or bad, is put on the same level. Kings succeed each other, not as rationals, but as animals. Can we then be surprised at the abject state of the human mind in monarchical countries, when the government itself is formed on such an abject leveling system? It has no fixed character. Today it is one thing; and tomorrow it is something else. It changes with the temper of every succeeding individual, and is subject to all the varieties of each. It is government through the medium of passions and accidents. It appears under all the various characters of childhood, decrepitude, dotage, a thing at nurse, in leading strings, or on crutches. It reverses the wholesome order of nature. It occasionally puts children over men, and the conceits of non-age over wisdom and experience. In short, we cannot conceive a more ridiculous figure of government than hereditary succession, in all its cases, presents.

Could it be made a decree in nature, or an edict registered in heaven, and man could know it, that virtue and wisdom should invariably appertain to hereditary succession, the objections to it would be removed; but when we see that nature acts as if she disowned and sported with the hereditary system; that the

mental characters of successors, in all countries, are below the average of human understanding; that one is a tyrant, another an idiot, a third insane, and some all three together, it is impossible to attach confidence to it, when reason in man has power to act.

It is not to the Abbé Sièyes that I need apply this reasoning; he has already saved me that trouble by giving his own opinion upon the case. "If it be asked," says he, "what is my opinion with respect to hereditary right, I answer, without hesitation that, in good theory, an hereditary transmission of any power or office can never accord with the laws of true representation. Hereditaryship is, in this sense, as much an attain upon principle as an outrage upon society. But let us," continues he, "refer to the history of all elective monarchies and principalities; is there one in which the elective mode is not worse than the hereditary succession?"

As to debating on which is the worst of the two, is admitting both to be bad; and herein we are agreed. The preference which the abbé has given, is a condemnation of the thing he prefers. Such a mode of reasoning on such a subject is inadmissible, because it finally amounts to an accusation of providence, as if she had left to man no other choice with respect to government than between two evils, the best of which he admits to be "*an attain upon principle, and an outrage upon society.*"

Passing over, for the present, all the evils and mischiefs which monarchy has occasioned in the world, nothing can more effectually prove its uselessness in a state of *civil government* than making it hereditary. Would we make any office hereditary that required wisdom and abilities to fill it? And where wisdom and abilities are not necessary, such an office, whatever it may be, is superfluous or insignificant.

Hereditary succession is a burlesque upon monarchy. It puts it in the most ridiculous light by presenting it as an office which any child or idiot may fill. It requires some talents to be a common mechanic; but to be a king requires only the animal figure of man—a sort of breathing automaton. This

sort of superstition may last a few years more, but it cannot long resist the awakened reason and interest of man.

As to Mr. Burke, he is a stickler for monarchy, not altogether as a pensioner, if he is one, which I believe, but as a political man. He has taken up a contemptible opinion of mankind, who, in their turn, are taking up the same of him. He considers them as a herd of beings that must be governed by fraud, effigy, and show; and an idol would be as good a figure of monarchy with him, as a man. I will, however, do him the justice to say that, with respect to America, he has been very complimentary. He always contended, at least in my hearing, that the people of America were more enlightened than those of England, or of any country in Europe; and that therefore the imposition of show was not necessary in their governments.

Though the comparison between hereditary and elective monarchy, which the abbé had made, is unnecessary to the case, because the representative system rejects both; yet were I to make the comparison, I should decide contrary to what he has done.

The civil wars which have originated from contested hereditary claims are more numerous, and have been more dreadful, and of longer continuance than those which have been occasioned by election. All the civil wars in France arose from the hereditary system; they were either produced by hereditary claims, or by the imperfection of the hereditary form, which admits of regencies, or monarchy at nurse. With respect to England, its history is full of the same misfortunes. The contests for succession between the houses of York and Lancaster lasted a whole century; and others of a similar nature have renewed themselves since that period. Those of 1715 and 1745 were of the same kind. The succession-war for the crown of Spain embroiled almost half of Europe. The disturbances in Holland are generated from the hereditaryship of the stadtholder. A government calling itself free, with an hereditary office, is like a thorn in the flesh that produces a fermentation which endeavors to discharge it.

found. I smile to myself when I contemplate the ridiculous insignificance into which literature and all the sciences would sink, were they made hereditary; and I carry the same idea into governments. An hereditary governor is as inconsistent as an hereditary author. I know not whether Homer or Euclid had sons; but I will venture an opinion that if they had, and had left their works unfinished, those sons could not have completed them.

Do we need a stronger evidence of the absurdity of hereditary government than is seen in descendants of those men, in any line of life, who once were famous? Is there scarcely an instance in which there is not a total reverse of the character? It appears as if the tide of mental faculties flowed as far as it could in certain channels, and then forsook its course and arose in others. How irrational then is the hereditary system which establishes channels of power in company with which wisdom refuses to flow! By continuing this absurdity, man is perpetually in contradiction with himself; he accepts, for a king, or a chief magistrate, or a legislator, a person whom he would not elect for a constable.

It appears to general observation that revolutions create genius and talents; but those events do no more than bring them forward. There exists in man a mass of sense lying in a dormant state, and which, unless something excites it to action, will descend with him, in that condition, to the grave. As it is to the advantage of society that the whole of its faculties should be employed, the construction of government ought to be such as to bring forward, by a quiet and regular operation, all that extent of capacity which never fails to appear in revolutions.

This cannot take place in the insipid state of hereditary government, not only because it prevents, but because it operates to benumb. When the mind of a nation is bowed down by any political superstition in its government, such as hereditary succession is, it loses a considerable portion of its powers on all other subjects and objects. Hereditary succession requires the same obedience to ignorance as to wisdom; and when once the mind can bring itself to pay this indiscriminate reverence,

it descends below the stature of mental manhood. It is fit to be great only in little things. It acts a treachery upon itself, and suffocates the sensations that urge to detection.

Though the ancient governments present to us a miserable picture of the condition of man, there is one which above all others exempts itself from the general description. I mean the democracy of the Athenians. We see more to admire and less to condemn, in that great, extraordinary people, than in anything which history affords.

Mr. Burke is so little acquainted with constituent principles of government that he confounds democracy and representation together. Representation was a thing unknown in the ancient democracies. In those the mass of the people met and enacted laws (grammatically speaking) in the first person. Simple democracy was no other than the common hall of the ancients. It signifies the *form* as well as the public principle of the government. As these democracies increased in population, and the territory extended, the simple democratical form became unwieldly and impracticable; and as the system of representation was not known, the consequence was they either degenerated convulsively into monarchies or became absorbed into such as then existed. Had the system of representation been then understood, as it now is, there is no reason to believe that those forms of government now called monarchical or aristocratical would ever have taken place. It was the want of some method to consolidate the parts of society after it became too populous and too extensive for the simple democratical form, and also the lax and solitary condition of shepherds and herdsmen in other parts of the world, that afforded opportunities to those unnatural modes of government to begin.

As it is necessary to clear away the rubbish of errors into which the subject of government has been thrown, I shall proceed to remark on some others.

It has always been the political craft of courtiers and court governments to abuse something which they called republicanism; but what republicanism was, or is, they never attempt to explain. Let us examine a little into this case,

The only forms of government are the democratical, the aristocratical, the monarchical, and what is now called the representative.

What is called a *republic* is not any *particular form* of government. It is wholly characteristic of the purport, matter, or object for which government ought to be instituted, and on which it is to be employed, *res-publica*, the public affairs, or the public good; or, literally translated, the *public thing*. It is a word of a good original, referring to what ought to be the character and business of government; and in this sense it is naturally opposed to the word *monarchy*, which has a base original signification. It means arbitrary power in an individual person; in the exercise of which, *himself*, and not the *res-publica*, is the object.

Every government that does not act on the principle of a republic, or, in other words, that does not make the *res-publica* its whole and sole object, is not a good government. Republican government is no other than government established and conducted for the interest of the public, as well individually as collectively. It is not necessarily connected with any particular form, but it most naturally associates with the representative form, as being best calculated to secure the end for which a nation is at the expense of supporting it.

Various forms of government have affected to style themselves republics. Poland calls itself a republic, but is in fact an hereditary aristocracy, with what is called an elective monarchy. Holland calls itself a republic, which is chiefly aristocratical, with an hereditary stadtholdership. But the government of America, which is wholly on the system of representation, is the only real republic in character and practice that now exists. Its government has no other object than the public business of the nation, and therefore it is properly a republic; and the Americans have taken care that *this*, and no other, shall be the object of their government, by their rejecting everything hereditary and establishing government on the system of representation only.

Those who have said that a republic is not a *form* of govern-

ment calculated for countries of great extent mistook, in the first place, the *business* of a government for a *form* of government; for the *res-publica* equally appertains to every extent of territory and population. And in the second place, if they meant anything with respect to *form*, it was the simple democratical form, such as was the mode of government in the ancient democracies, in which there was no representation. The case, therefore, is not that a republic cannot be extensive, but that it cannot be extensive on the simple democratic form; and the question naturally presents itself, *What is the best form of government for conducting the RES-PUBLICA or PUBLIC BUSINESS of a nation after it becomes too extensive and populous for the simple democratical form?*

It cannot be monarchy, because monarchy is subject to an objection of the same amount to which the democratical form was subject.

It is possible that an individual may lay down a system of principles on which government shall be constitutionally established to any extent of territory. This is no more than an operation of the mind, acting by its own powers. But the practice upon those principles, as applying to the various and numerous circumstances of a nation, its agriculture, manufactures, trade, commerce, &c. require a knowledge, of a different kind, and which can be had only from the various parts of society. It is an assemblage of practical knowledge which no one individual can possess; and therefore the monarchical form is as much limited, in useful practice, from the incompetency of knowledge, as was the democratical form from the multiplicity of population. The one degenerates, by extension, into confusion; the other, into ignorance and incapacity, of which all the great monarchies are an evidence. The monarchical form, therefore, could not be a substitute for the democratical, because it has equal inconveniences.

Much less could it when made hereditary. This is the most effectual of all forms to preclude knowledge. Neither could the high democratical mind have voluntarily yielded itself to be governed by children and idiots, and all the motley insig-

nificance of character, which attends such a mere animal system, the disgrace and the reproach of reason and of man.

As to the aristocratical form, it has the same vices and defects with the monarchical, except that the chance of abilities is better from the proportion of numbers, but there is still no security for the right use and application of them.

Referring, then, to the original simple democracy, it affords the true data from which government on a large scale can begin. It is incapable of extension, not from its principle, but from the inconvenience of its form; and monarchy and aristocracy from their incapacity. Retaining, then, democracy as the ground, and rejecting the corrupt systems of monarchy and aristocracy, the representative system naturally presents itself; remedying at once the defects of the simple democracy as to form, and the incapacity of the other two with regard to knowledge.

Simple democracy was society governing itself without the use of secondary means. By ingrafting representation upon democracy, we arrive at a system of government capable of embracing and confederating all the various interests and every extent of territory and population; and that also with advantages as much superior to hereditary government as the republic of letters is to hereditary literature.

It is on this system that the American government is founded. It is representation ingrafted upon democracy. It has settled the form by a scale parallel in all cases to the extent of the principle. What Athens was in miniature, America will be in magnitude. The one was the wonder of the ancient world—the other is becoming the admiration and model of the present. It is the easiest of all the forms of government to be understood and the most eligible in practice; and excludes at once the ignorance and insecurity of the hereditary mode and the inconvenience of the simple democracy.

It is impossible to conceive a system of government capable of acting over such an extent of territory, and such a circle of interests, as is produced by the operation of representation. France, great and populous as it is, is but a spot in the capaciousness of the system. It adapts itself to all possible cases.

It is preferable to simple democracy even in small territories. Athens, by representation, would have surpassed her own democracy.

That which is called government, or rather that which we ought to conceive government to be, is no more than some common center in which all the parts of society unite. This cannot be established by any method so conducive to the various interests of the community as by the representative system. It concentrates the knowledge necessary to the interests of the parts and of the whole. It places government in a state of constant maturity. It is, as has been already observed, never young, never old. It is subject neither to nonage nor dotage. It is never in the cradle nor on crutches. It admits not of a separation between knowledge and power, and is superior, as government ought always to be, to all the accidents of individual man, and is therefore superior to what is called monarchy.

A nation is not a body, the figure of which is to be represented by the human body; but is like a body contained within a circle, having a common center in which every radius meets; and that center is formed by representation. To connect representation with what is called monarchy is eccentric government. Representation is of itself the delegated monarchy of a nation, and cannot debase itself by dividing it with another.

Mr. Burke has two or three times in his parliamentary speeches, and in his publications, made use of a jingle of words that convey no ideas. Speaking of government, he says, "It is better to have monarchy for its basis, and republicanism for its corrective, than republicanism for its basis, and monarchy for its corrective." If he means that it is better to correct folly with wisdom than wisdom with folly, I will no otherwise contend with him than to say it would be much better to reject the folly altogether.

But what is this thing which Mr. Burke calls monarchy? Will he explain it: all mankind can understand what representation is; and that it must necessarily include a variety of knowledge and talents. But what security is there for the

same qualities on the part of monarchy? Or, when this monarchy is a child, where then is the wisdom? What does it know about government? Who then is the monarch? Or where is the monarchy? If it is to be performed by regency, it proves it to be a farce. A regency is a mock species of republic, and the whole of monarchy deserves no better appellation. It is a thing as various as imagination can paint. It has none of the stable character that government ought to possess. Every succession is a revolution, and every regency a counter-revolution. The whole of it is a scene of perpetual court cabal and intrigue, of which Mr. Burke is himself an instance.

Whether I have too little sense to see, or too much to be imposed upon; whether I have too much or too little pride, or of anything else, I leave out of the question; but certain it is that what is called monarchy always appears to me a silly, contemptible thing. I compare it to something kept behind a curtain, about which there is a great deal of bustle and fuss, and a wonderful air of seeming solemnity; but when, by any accident, the curtain happens to be open and the company see what it is, they burst into laughter.

In the representative system of government, nothing like this can happen. Like the nation itself, it possesses a perpetual stamina as well of body as of mind, and presents itself on the open theater of the world in a fair and manly manner. Whatever are its excellencies or its defects, they are visible to all. It exists not by fraud and mystery; it deals not in cant and sophistry; but inspires a language that, passing from heart to heart, is felt and understood.

We must shut our eyes against reason, we must basely degrade our understanding, not to see the folly of what is called monarchy. Nature is orderly in all her works; but this is a mode of government that counteracts nature. It turns the progress of the human faculties upside down. It subjects age to be governed by children, and wisdom by folly.

On the contrary, the representative system is always parallel with the order and immutable laws of nature, and meets the reason of man in every part. For example:

In the American federal government, more power is delegated to the President of the United States, than to any other individual member of congress. He cannot, therefore, be elected to this office under the age of thirty-five years. By this time the judgment of man becomes matured, and he has lived long enough to be acquainted with men and things, and the country with him. But on the monarchical plan (exclusive of the numerous chances there are against every man born into the world, of drawing a prize in the lottery of human faculties), the next in succession, whatever he may be, is put at the head of a nation, and of a government at the age of eighteen years. Does this appear like an act of wisdom? Is it consistent with the proper dignity and the manly character of a nation? Where is the propriety of calling such a lad the father of the people? In all other cases, a person is a minor until the age of twenty-one years. Before this period he is not trusted with the management of an acre of land, or with the heritable property of a flock of sheep, or a herd of swine; but wonderful to tell! he may at the age of eighteen years be trusted with a nation.

That monarchy is all a bubble, a mere court artifice to procure money, is evident (at least to me) in every character in which it can be viewed. It would be almost impossible, on the rational system of representative government, to make out a bill of expenses to such an enormous amount as this deception admits. Government is not of itself a very chargeable institution. The whole expense of the federal government of America, founded, as I have already said, on the system of representation, and extending over a country nearly ten times as large as England, is but six hundred thousand dollars, or one hundred and thirty thousand pounds sterling.

I presume that no man in his sober senses will compare the character of any of the kings of Europe, with that of General Washington. Yet, in France, and also in England, the expense of the civil list only, for the support of one man, is eight times greater than the whole expense of the federal government of America. To assign a reason for this appears almost impossible. The generality of people in America, especially the poor, are

more able to pay taxes than the generality of people either in France or England.

But the case is that the representative system diffuses such a body of knowledge throughout the nation, on the subject of government, as to explode ignorance and preclude imposition. The craft of courts cannot be acted on that ground. There is no place for mystery; nowhere for it to begin. Those who are not in the representation know as much of the nature of business as those who are. An affectation of mysterious importance would there be scouted. Nations can have no secrets; and the secrets of courts, like those of individuals, are always their defects.

In the representative system, the reason for everything must publicly appear. Every man is a proprietor in government, and considers it a necessary part of his business to understand. It concerns his interest because it affects his property. He examines the cost, and compares it with the advantages; and above all, he does not adopt the slavish custom of following what in other governments are called *leaders*.

It can only be by blinding the understanding of man, and making him believe that government is some wonderful mysterious thing, that excessive revenues are obtained. Monarchy is well calculated to ensure this end. It is the popery of government; a thing kept up to amuse the ignorant, and quiet them into paying taxes.

The government of a free country, properly speaking, is not in the persons, but in the laws. The enacting of those requires no great expense; and when they are administered, the whole of civil government is performed—the rest is all court contrivance.

#### CHAPTER IV. OF CONSTITUTIONS

That men mean distinct and separate things when they talk of constitutions and of governments is evident; or why are those terms distinctly and separately used? A constitution is not the act of a government, but of a people constituting a government; and government without a constitution is power without a right.

All power exercised over a nation must have some beginning. It must be either delegated, or assumed. There are no other sources. All delegated power is trust, and all assumed power is usurpation. Time does not alter the nature and quality of either.

In viewing this subject, the case and circumstances of America present themselves as in the beginning of a world; and our inquiry into the origin of government is shortened by referring to the facts that have arisen in our day. We have no occasion to roam for information into the obscure field of antiquity, nor hazard ourselves upon conjecture. We are brought at once to the point of seeing government begin, as if we had lived in the beginning of time. The real volume, not of history, but of facts, is directly before us, unmutilated by contrivance or the errors of tradition.

I will here concisely state the commencement of the American constitutions; by which the difference between constitutions and governments will sufficiently appear.

It may not be improper to remind the reader that the United States of America consist of thirteen states, each of which established a government for itself, after the Declaration of Independence, of the fourth of July, 1776. Each state acted independently of the rest in forming its government; but the same general principle pervades the whole. When the several state governments were formed, they proceeded to form the federal government that acts over the whole in all matters which concern the interest of the whole, or which relate to the intercourse of the several states with each other, or with foreign nations. I will begin with giving an instance from one of the state governments (that of Pennsylvania) and then proceed to the federal government.

The state of Pennsylvania, though nearly of the same extent of territory as England, was then divided into twelve counties. Each of those counties had elected a committee at the commencement of the dispute with the English government; and as the city of Philadelphia, which also had its committee, was the most central for intelligence, it became the center of communication to the several county committees. When it be-

came necessary to proceed to the formation of a government, the committee of Philadelphia proposed a conference of all the county committees to be held in that city, and which met the latter end of July, 1776.

Though these committees had been elected by the people, they were not elected expressly for the purpose, nor invested with the authority of forming a constitution: and as they could not, consistently with the American idea of rights, assume such a power, they could only confer upon the matter, and put it into a train of operation. The conferees, therefore, did no more than state the case and recommend to the several counties to elect six representatives for each county, to meet in convention at Philadelphia, with powers to form a constitution and propose it for public consideration.

This convention, of which Benjamin Franklin was president, having met and deliberated, and agreed upon a constitution, they next ordered it to be published, not as a thing established, but for the consideration of the whole people, their approbation or rejection, and then adjourned to a stated time. When the time of adjournment was expired, the convention reassembled; and as the general opinion of the people in approbation\* of it was then known, the constitution was signed, sealed, and proclaimed on the *authority of the people*, and the original instrument deposited as a public record. The convention then appointed a day for the general election of the representatives who were to compose the government, and the time it should commence; and having done this, they dissolved, and returned to their several homes and occupations.

In this constitution were laid down, first, a declaration of rights. Then followed the form which the government should have, and the powers it should possess—the authority of the courts of judicature and of juries—the manner in which elections should be conducted, and the proportion of representatives to the number of electors—the time which each succeeding assembly should continue, which was one year—the mode of levying and of accounting for the expenditure of public money—of appointing public officers, &c.

No article of this constitution could be altered or infringed at the discretion of the government that was to ensue. It was to that government a law. But as it would have been unwise to preclude the benefit of experience, and in order also to prevent the accumulation of errors, if any should be found, and to preserve a unison of government with the circumstances of the state at all times, the constitution provided that, at the expiration of every seven years, a convention should be elected; for the express purpose of revising the constitution, and making alterations, additions, or abolitions therein, if any such should be found necessary.

Here we see a regular process—a government issuing out of a constitution, formed by the people in their original character; and that constitution serving not only as an authority, but as a law of control to the government. It was the political bible of the state. Scarcely a family was without it. Every member of the government had a copy; and nothing was more common, when any debate arose on the principle of a bill, or on the extent of any species of authority, than for the members to take the printed constitution out of their pocket, and read the chapter with which such matter in debate was connected.

Having thus given an instance from one of the states, I will show the proceedings by which the federal constitution of the United States arose and was formed.

Congress, at its two first meetings, in September 1774 and May 1775, was nothing more than a deputation from the legislatures of the several provinces, afterwards states; and had no other authority than what arose from common consent and the necessity of its acting as a public body. In everything which related to the internal affairs of America, congress went no further than to issue recommendations, to the several provincial assemblies, who at discretion adopted them or not. Nothing on the part of congress was compulsive; yet, in this situation, it was more faithfully and affectionately obeyed, than was any government in Europe. This instance, like that of the national assembly of France, sufficiently shows that the strength of government does not consist in anything *within* itself, but

in the attachment of a nation, and the interest which the people feel in supporting it. When this is lost, government is but a child in power; and though, like the old government of France, it may harass individuals for a while, it but facilitates its own fall.

After the Declaration of Independence, it became consistent with the principle on which representative government is founded that the authority of congress should be defined and established. Whether that authority should be more or less than congress then discretionarily exercised, was not then the question. It was merely the rectitude of the measure.

For this purpose the act, called the Act of Confederation (which was a sort of imperfect federal constitution), was proposed, and after long deliberation was concluded in the year 1781. It was not the act of congress, because it is repugnant to the principles of representative government that a body should give power to itself. Congress first informed the several states of the powers which it conceived were necessary to be invested in the union, to enable it to perform the duties and services required from it; and the states severally agreed with each other, and concentrated in congress those powers.

It may not be improper to observe that in both those instances (the one of Pennsylvania, and the other of the United States) there is no such thing as the idea of a compact between the people on one side, and the government on the other. The compact was that of the people with each other, to produce and constitute a government. To suppose that any government can be party in a compact with the whole people is to suppose it to have existence before it can have a right to exist. The only instance in which a compact can take place between the people and those who exercise the government is that the people shall pay them, while they choose to employ them.

Government is not a trade which any man or body of men has a right to set up and exercise for his own emolument, but is altogether a trust, in right of those by whom that trust is delegated, and by whom it is always resumable. It has of itself no rights; they are altogether duties.

Having thus given two instances of the original formation of

a constitution, I will show the manner in which both have been changed since their first establishment.

The powers vested in the governments of the several states, by the state constitutions, were found, upon experience, to be too great; and those vested in the federal government, by the act of confederation, too little. The defect was not in the principle, but in the distribution of power.

Numerous publications, in pamphlets and in the newspapers, appeared on the propriety and necessity of new-modeling the federal government. After some time of public discussion, carried on through the channel of the press and in conversations, the state of Virginia, experiencing some inconvenience with respect to commerce, proposed holding a continental conference; in consequence of which a deputation from five or six of the state assemblies met at Annapolis in Maryland, in 1786. This meeting, not conceiving itself sufficiently authorized to go into the business of a reform, did no more than state their general opinions of the propriety of the measure and recommend that a convention of all the states should be held the year following.

This convention met at Philadelphia, in May 1787, of which General Washington was elected president. He was not at that time connected with any of the state governments or with congress. He delivered up his commission when the war ended, and since then had lived a private citizen.

The convention went deeply into all the subjects; and having, after a variety of debate and investigation, agreed among themselves upon the several parts of a federal constitution, the next question was the manner of giving it authority and practice.

For this purpose, they did not, like a cabal of courtiers, send for a Dutch stadtholder, or a German elector; but they referred the whole matter to the sense and interest of the country.

They first directed that the proposed constitution should be published. Second, that each state should elect a convention expressly for the purpose of taking it into consideration, and of ratifying or rejecting it; and that as soon as the approbation and

ratification of any nine states should be given, that those states should proceed to the election of their proportion of members to the new federal government; and that the operation of it should then begin, and the former federal government cease.

The several states proceeded accordingly to elect their conventions; some of those conventions ratified the constitution by very large majorities, and two or three unanimously. In others there was much debate and division of opinion. In the Massachusetts convention, which met at Boston, the majority was not above nineteen or twenty, in about three hundred members; but such is the nature of representative government, that it quietly decides all matters by majority. After the debate in the Massachusetts convention was closed, and the vote taken, the objecting members rose and declared, "*That though they had argued and voted against it, because certain parts appeared to them in a different light to what they appeared to other members; yet as the vote had been decided in favor of the constitution as proposed, they should give it the same practical support as if they had voted for it.*"

As soon as nine states had concurred (and the rest followed in the order their conventions were elected), the old fabric of the federal government was taken down, and a new one erected, of which General Washington is president. In this place I cannot help remarking that the character and services of this gentleman are sufficient to put all those men called kings to shame. While they are receiving from the sweat and labors of mankind a prodigality of pay, to which neither their abilities nor their services can entitle them, he is rendering every service in his power, and refusing every pecuniary reward. He accepted no pay as commander-in-chief; he accepts none as president of the United States.

After the new federal constitution was established, the state of Pennsylvania, conceiving that some parts of its own constitution required to be altered, elected a convention for that purpose. The proposed alterations were published, and the people concurring therein, they were established.

In forming those constitutions, or in altering them, little or

no inconvenience took place. The ordinary course of things was not interrupted, and the advantages have been much. It is always the interest of a far greater number of people in a nation to have things right than to let them remain wrong; and when public matters are open to debate, and the public judgment free, it will not decide wrong unless it decides too hastily.

In the two instances of changing the constitutions, the government then in being were not actors either way. Government has no right to make itself a party in any debate respecting the principles or modes of forming or of changing constitutions. It is not for the benefit of those who exercise the powers of government, that constitutions, and the governments issuing from them, are established. In all those matters, the right of judging and acting are in those who pay, and not in those who receive.

A constitution is the property of a nation, and not of those who exercise the government. All the constitutions of America are declared to be established on the authority of the people. In France, the word nation is used instead of the people; but in both cases, a constitution is a thing antecedent to the government, and always distinct therefrom.

In England, it is not difficult to perceive that everything has a constitution, except the nation. Every society and association that is established first agreed upon a number of original articles, digested into form, which are its constitution. It then appointed its officers, whose powers and authorities are described in that constitution, and the government of that society then commenced. Those officers, by whatever name they are called, have no authority to add to, alter, or abridge the original articles. It is only to the constituting power that this right belongs.

From the want of understanding the difference between a constitution and a government, Dr. Johnson, and all writers of his description, have always bewildered themselves. They could not but perceive that there must necessarily be a *controlling* power existing somewhere, and they placed this power in the discretion of the persons exercising the government, in-

stead of placing it in a constitution formed by the nation. When it is in a constitution, it has the nation for its support, and the natural and the political controlling powers are together. The laws which are enacted by governments control men only as individuals, but the nation, through its constitution, controls the whole government, and has a natural ability so to do. The final controlling power, therefore, and the original constituting power are one and the same power.

Dr. Johnson could not have advanced such a position in any country where there was a constitution; and he is himself an evidence that no such thing as a constitution exists in England. But it may be put as a question, not improper to be investigated, that if a constitution does not exist, how came the idea of its existence so generally established?

In order to decide this question, it is necessary to consider a constitution in both its cases: 1st, as creating a government and giving it powers; 2d, as regulating and restraining the powers so given.

If we begin with William of Normandy, we find that the government of England was originally a tyranny, founded on an invasion and conquest of the country. This being admitted, it will then appear that the exertion of the nation, at different periods, to abate that tyranny and render it less intolerable, has been credited for a constitution.

Magna Charta, as it was called (it is now like an almanac of the same date), was no more than compelling the government to renounce a part of its assumptions. It did not create and give powers to government in the manner a constitution does; but was, as far as it went, of the nature of a re-conquest, and not of a constitution; for, could the nation have totally expelled the usurpation, as France has done its despotism, it would then have had a constitution to form.

The history of the Edwards and the Henrys, and up to the commencement of the Stuarts, exhibits as many instances of tyranny as could be acted within the limits to which the nation had restricted it. The Stuarts endeavored to pass those limits, and their fate is well-known. In all those instances we see

nothing of a constitution, but only of restrictions on assumed power.

After this, another William, descended from the same stock, and claiming from the same origin, gained possession; and of the two evils, James and William, the nation preferred what it thought the least; since, from the circumstances, it must take one. The act, called the Bill of Rights, comes here into view. What is it but a bargain which the parts of the government made with each other to divide power, profit, and privileges? You shall have so much, and I will have the rest; and with respect to the nation, it said, for *your share*, you *shall have the right of petitioning*. This being the case, the bill of rights is more properly a bill of wrongs and of insult. As to what is called the convention-parliament, it was a thing that made itself, and then made the authority by which it acted. A few persons got together and called themselves by that name. Several of them had never been elected, and none of them for the purpose.

From the time of William, a species of government arose, issuing out of this coalition bill of rights; and more so, since the corruption introduced at the Hanover succession by the agency of Walpole: that can be described by no other name than a despotic legislation. Though the parts may embarrass each other, the whole has no bounds; and the only right it acknowledges out of itself is the right of petitioning. Where then is the constitution that either gives or restrains power?

It is not because a part of the government is elective that makes it less a despotism, if the persons so elected possess afterwards, as a parliament, unlimited powers. Election, in this case, becomes separated from representation, and the candidates are candidates for despotism.

I cannot believe that any nation, reasoning on its own rights, would have thought of calling those things a *constitution*, if the cry of constitution had not been set up by the government. It has got into circulation, like the words *bore* and *quix*, by being chalked up in speeches of parliament, as those words were on window shutters and doorposts; but whatever the con-

stitution may be in other respects, it has undoubtedly been *the most productive machine for taxation that was ever invented*. The taxes in France, under the new constitution, are not quite thirteen shillings per head,<sup>1</sup> and the taxes in England, under what is called its present constitution, are forty-eight shillings and sixpence per head, men, women, and children, amounting to nearly seventeen millions sterling, besides the expense of collection, which is upwards of a million more.

In a country like England, where the whole of the civil government is executed by the people of every town and county by means of parish officers, magistrates, quarterly sessions, juries, and assize, without any trouble to what is called government, or any other expense to the revenue than the salary of the judges, it is astonishing how such a mass of taxes can be employed. Not even the internal defense of the country is paid out of the revenue. On all occasions, whether real or contrived, recourse<sup>\*</sup> is continually had to new loans and to new taxes. No wonder, then, that a machine of government so advantageous to the advocates of a court should be so triumphantly extolled! No wonder that St. James's or St. Stephen's should echo with the continual cry of constitution! No wonder that the French revolution should be reprobated, and the *res-publica* treated with reproach! The *red book* of England, like the red book of France, will explain the reason.<sup>2</sup>

I will now, by way of relaxation, turn a thought or two to Mr. Burke. I ask his pardon for neglecting him so long.

<sup>1</sup>The whole amount of the assessed taxes of France, for the present year, is three hundred millions of francs, which is twelve millions and a half sterling; and the incidental taxes are estimated at three millions, making in the whole fifteen millions and an half; which among twenty-four millions of people, is not quite thirty shillings per head. France has lessened her taxes since the revolution, nearly nine millions sterling annually. Before the revolution the city of Paris paid a duty of upwards of thirty per cent on all articles brought into the city. This tax was collected at the city gates. It was taken off on the first of last May, and the gates taken down. [Paine's note.]

<sup>2</sup>What was called the *livre rouge*, or the red book, in France, was not exactly similar to the court calendar in England; but it sufficiently showed how a great part of the taxes were lavished. [Paine's note.]

"America," says he (in his speech on the Canada constitution bill), "never dreamed of such absurd doctrine as the Rights of Man."

Mr. Burke is such a bold presumer, and advances his assertions and premises with such a deficiency of judgment, that, without troubling ourselves about principles of philosophy or politics, the mere logical conclusions they produce are ridiculous. For instance:

If governments, as Mr. Burke asserts, are not founded on the rights of *man*, and are founded on *any rights* at all, they consequently must be founded on the rights of *something* that is *not man*. What, then, is that something?

Generally speaking, we know of no other creatures that inhabit the earth than man and beast; and in all cases where only two things offer themselves and one must be admitted, a negation proved on any one amounts to an affirmative on the other; and therefore, Mr. Burke, by proving against the rights of *man*, proves in behalf of the *beast*; and consequently, proves that government is a beast: and as difficult things sometimes explain each other, we now see the origin of keeping wild beasts in the Tower; for they certainly can be of no other use than to show the origin of the government. They are in the place of a constitution. O! John Bull, what honors thou hast lost by not being a wild beast. Thou mightest, on Mr. Burke's system, have been in the Tower for life.

If Mr. Burke's arguments have not weight enough to keep one serious, the fault is less mine than his; and as I am willing to make an apology to the reader for the liberty I have taken, I hope Mr. Burke will also make his for giving the cause.

Having thus paid Mr. Burke the compliment of remembering him, I return to the subject.

From the want of a constitution in England to restrain and regulate the wild impulse of power, many of the laws are irrational and tyrannical, and the administration of them vague and problematical.

The attention of the government of England (for I rather choose to call it by this name, than the English government)

appears, since its political connection with Germany, to have been so completely engrossed and absorbed by foreign affairs, and the means of raising taxes, that it seems to exist for no other purposes. Domestic concerns are neglected; and, with respect to regular law, there is scarcely such a thing.

Almost every case must now be determined by some precedent, be that precedent good or bad, or whether it properly applies or not; and the practice is become so general, as to suggest a suspicion, that it proceeds from a deeper policy than at first sight appears.

Since the revolution of America, and more so since that of France, this preaching up the doctrine of precedents, drawn from times and circumstances antecedent to those events, has been the studied practice of the English government. The generality of those precedents are founded on principles and opinions the reverse of what they ought to be; and the greater distance of time they are drawn from, the more they are to be suspected. But by associating those precedents with a superstitious reverence for ancient things, as monks show relics and call them holy, the generality of mankind are deceived into the design. Governments now act as if they were afraid to awaken a single reflection in man. They are softly leading him to the sepulchre of precedents to deaden his faculties and call his attention from the scene of revolutions. They feel that he is arriving at knowledge faster than they wish, and their policy of precedents is the barometer of their fears. This political popery, like the ecclesiastical popery of old, has had its day and is hastening to its exit. The ragged relic and the antiquated precedent, the monk and the monarch, will moulder together.

Government by precedent, without any regard to the principle of the precedent, is one of the vilest systems that can be set up. In numerous instances the precedent ought to operate as a warning and not as an example, and requires to be shunned instead of imitated; but instead of this, precedents are taken in the lump and put at once for constitution and for law.

Either the doctrine of precedent is policy to keep a man in a state of ignorance, or it is a practical confession that wisdom

degenerates in governments as governments increase in age, and can only hobble along by the stilts and crutches of precedents. How is it that the same persons who would proudly be thought wiser than their predecessors, appear at the same time only as the ghosts of departed wisdom? How strangely is antiquity treated! To answer some purposes it is spoken of as the times of darkness and ignorance, and to answer others it is put for the light of the world.

If the doctrine of precedents is to be followed, the expenses of government need not continue the same. Why pay men extravagantly who have but little to do? If everything that can happen is already in precedent, legislation is at an end, and precedent, like a dictionary, determines every case. Either, therefore, government has arrived at its dotage and requires to be renovated, or all the occasions for exercising its wisdom have occurred.

We now see all over Europe, and particularly in England, the curious phenomenon of a nation looking one way, and a government the other; the one forward, and the other backward. If governments are to go on by precedent while nations go on by improvement they must at last come to a final separation, and the sooner and the more civilly they determine this point, the better it will be for them.<sup>1</sup>

Having thus spoken of constitutions generally as things distinct from actual governments, let us proceed to consider the parts of which a constitution is composed.

<sup>1</sup>In England, the improvements in agriculture, useful arts, manufactures, and commerce have been made in opposition to the genius of its government, which is that of following precedents. It is from the enterprise and industry of the individuals and their numerous associations, in which, tritely speaking, government is neither pillow nor bolster, that these improvements have proceeded. No man thought about the government, or who was in, or who was out, when he was planning or executing those things: and all he had to hope, with respect to government, was that it would let him alone. Three or four very silly ministerial newspapers are continually offending against the spirit of national improvement, by ascribing it to a minister. They may with as much truth ascribe this book to a minister. [Paine's note.]

Opinions differ more on this subject than with respect to the whole. That a nation ought to have a constitution as a rule for the conduct of its government, is a simple question in which all men, not directly courtiers, will agree. It is only on the component parts that questions and opinions multiply.

But this difficulty, like every other, will diminish when put into a train of being rightly understood.

The first thing is that a nation has a right to establish a constitution.

Whether it exercises this right in the most judicious manner at first is quite another case. It exercises it agreeably to the judgment it possesses; and by continuing to do so, all errors will at last be exploded.

When this right is established in a nation, there is no fear that it will be employed to its own injury. A nation can have no interest in being wrong.

Though all the constitutions of America are on one general principle, yet no two of them are exactly alike in their component parts, or in the distribution of the powers which they give to the actual governments. Some are more and others less complex.

In forming a constitution it is first necessary to consider what are the ends for which government is necessary: secondly, what are the best means, and the least expensive, for accomplishing those ends.

Government is nothing more than a national association; and the object of this association is the good of all, as well individually as collectively. Every man wishes to pursue his occupation, and to enjoy the fruits of his labors and the produce of his property in peace and safety, and with the least possible expense. When these things are accomplished, all the objects for which government ought to be established are answered.

It has been customary to consider government under three distinct general heads. The legislative, the executive, and the judicial.

But if we permit our judgment to act unincumbered by the habit of multiplied terms, we can perceive no more than two

divisions of power of which civil government is composed, namely, that of legislating or enacting laws, and that of executing or administering them. Everything, therefore, appertaining to civil government, classes itself under one or other of these two divisions.

So far as regards the execution of the laws, that which is called the judicial power is strictly and properly the executive power of every country. It is that power to which every individual has an appeal, and which causes the laws to be executed; neither have we any other clear idea with respect to the official execution of the laws. In England, and also in America and France, this power begins with the magistrate and proceeds up through all the courts of judicature.

I leave to courtiers to explain what is meant by calling monarchy the executive power. It is merely a name in which acts of government are done; and any other, or none at all, would answer the same purpose. Laws have neither more nor less authority on this account. It must be from the justness of their principles, and the interest which a nation feels therein, that they derive support; if they require any other than this, it is a sign that something in the system of government is imperfect. Laws difficult to be executed cannot be generally good.

With respect to the organization of the *legislative power*, different modes have been adopted in different countries. In America it is generally composed of two houses. In France it consists but of one, but in both countries it is wholly by representation.

The case is that mankind (from the long tyranny of assumed power) have had so few opportunities of making the necessary trials on modes and principles of government, in order to discover the best, *that government is but now beginning to be known*, and experience is yet wanting to determine many particulars.

The objections against two houses are, first, that there is an inconsistency in any part of a whole legislature coming to a final determination by vote on any matter, whilst *that matter* with respect to *that whole* is yet only in a train of deliberation, and consequently open to new illustrations.

2d, That by taking the vote on each, as a separate body, it always admits of the possibility, and is often the case in practice, that the minority governs the majority, and that, in some instances, to a great degree of inconsistency.

3d, That two houses arbitrarily checking or controlling each other, is inconsistent; because it cannot be proved, on the principles of just representation, that either should be wiser or better than the other. They may check in the wrong as well as in the right; and therefore to give the power where we cannot give the wisdom to use it, nor be assured of its being rightly used, renders the hazard at least equal to the precaution.<sup>1</sup>

The objection against a single house is that it is always in a condition of committing itself too soon. But it should at the same time be remembered that when there is a constitution

<sup>1</sup>With respect to the two houses, of which the English parliament is composed, they appear to be effectually influenced into one, and, as a legislature, to have no temper of its own. The minister, whoever he at any time may be, touches it as with an opium wand and it sleeps obedience.

But if we look at the distinct abilities of the two houses, the difference will appear so great as to show the inconsistency of placing power where there can be no certainty of the judgment to use it. Wretched as the state of representation is in England, it is manhood compared with what is called the house of lords; and so little is this nicknamed house regarded that the people scarcely inquire at any time what it is doing. It appears also to be most under influence and the furthest removed from the general interest of the nation. In the debate on engaging in the Russian and Turkish war, the majority in the house of peers in favor of it was upwards of ninety, when in the other house, which is more than double its numbers, the majority was sixty-three.

The proceedings on Mr. Fox's bill, respecting the rights of juries, merits also to be noticed. The persons called the peers were not the objects of that bill. They are already in possession of more privileges than that bill gave to others. They are their own jury, and if any one of that house were prosecuted for a libel, he would not suffer, even upon conviction, for the first offense. Such inequality in laws ought not to exist in any country. The French constitution says that *the law is the same to every individual, whether to protect or to punish. All are equal in its sight.* [Paine's note.]

which defines the power and establishes the principles within which a legislature shall act, there is already a more effectual check provided, and more powerfully operating, than any other check can be. For example,

Were a bill to be brought into any of the American legislatures, similar to that which was passed into an act by the English parliament, at the commencement of the reign of George I, to extend the duration of the assemblies to a longer period than they now sit, the check is in the constitution, which in effect says *thus far shalt thou go and no further*.

But in order to remove the objection against a single house (that of acting with too quick an impulse) and at the same time to avoid the inconsistencies, in some cases absurdities, arising from the two houses, the following method has been proposed as an improvement on both.

1st, To have but one representation.

2d, To divide that representation, by lot, into two or three parts.

3d, That every proposed bill shall first be debated in those parts, by succession, that they may become hearers of each other, but without taking any vote. After which the whole representation to assemble for a general debate and determination by vote.

To this proposed improvement has been added another for the purpose of keeping the representation in a state of constant renovation; which is, that one third of the representation of each county shall go out at the expiration of one year, and the number be replaced by new elections. Another third at the expiration of the second year, replaced in like manner, and every third year to be a general election.<sup>1</sup>

But in whatever manner the separate parts of a constitution may be arranged, there is one general principle that distin-

<sup>1</sup>As to the state of representation in England, it is too absurd to be reasoned upon. Almost all the represented parts are decreasing in population and the unrepresented parts are increasing. A general convention of the nation is necessary to take the whole state of its government into consideration. [Paine's note.]

guishes freedom from slavery, which is that all *hereditary government over a people is to them a species of slavery and representative government is freedom.*

Considering government in the only light in which it should be considered, that of a NATIONAL ASSOCIATION, it ought to be so constructed as not to be disordered by any accident happening among the parts; and therefore no extraordinary power, capable of producing such an effect, should be lodged in the hands of any individual. The death, sickness, absence, or defection, of any one individual in a government ought to be a matter of no more consequence, with respect to the nation, than if the same circumstance had taken place in a member of the English parliament, or the French national assembly.

Scarcely anything presents a more degrading character of national greatness than its being thrown into confusion by anything happening to or acted by an individual; and the ridiculousness of the scene is often increased by the natural insignificance of the person by whom it is occasioned. Were a government so constructed that it could not go on unless a goose or a gander were present in the senate, the difficulties would be just as great and as real on the flight or sickness of the goose or the gander, as if they were called a king. We laugh at individuals for the silly difficulties they make to themselves, without perceiving that the greatest of all ridiculous things are acted in governments.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>It is related that in the canton of Berne, in Switzerland, it had been customary from time immemorial to keep a bear at the public expense, and the people had been taught to believe that if they had not a bear they should all be undone. It happened some years ago that the bear then in being was taken sick and died too suddenly to have his place immediately supplied with another. During the interregnum the people discovered that the corn grew and the vintage flourished, and the sun and moon continued to rise and set, and everything went on the same as before, and, taking courage from these circumstances, they resolved not to keep any more bears: for, said they, "a bear is a very voracious, expensive animal, and we were obliged to pull out his claws, lest he should hurt the citizens."

The story of the bear of Berne was related in some of the French newspapers at the time of the flight of Louis XVI, and the applica-

All the constitutions of America are on a plan that excludes the childish embarrassments which occur in monarchical countries. No suspension of government can there take place for a moment from any circumstance whatever. The system of representation provides for everything, and is the only system in which nations and governments can always appear in their proper character.

As extraordinary power ought not be lodged in the hands of any individual, so ought there to be no appropriations of public money to any person beyond what his services in a state may be worth. It signifies not whether a man be called a president, a king, an emperor, a senator, or by any other name which propriety or folly may devise or arrogance assume; it is only a certain service he can perform in the state; and the service of any such individual in the routine of office, whether such office be called monarchical, presidential, senatorial, or by another name or title, can never exceed the value of ten thousand pounds a year. All the great services that are done in the world are performed by volunteer characters who accept no pay for them; but the routine of office is always regulated to such a general standard of abilities as to be within the compass of numbers in every country to perform, and therefore cannot merit very extraordinary recompense. *Government, says Swift, is a plain thing, and fitted to the capacity of many heads.*

It is inhuman to talk of a million sterling a year, paid out of the public taxes of any country, for the support of any individual, whilst thousands who are forced to contribute thereto are pining with want and struggling with misery. Government does not consist in a contrast between prisons and palaces, between poverty and pomp; it is not instituted to rob the needy of his mite and increase the wretchedness of the wretched. But of this part of the subject I shall speak hereafter, and confine myself at present to political observations.

When extraordinary power and extraordinary pay are allotted  
tion of it to monarchy could not be mistaken in France; but it seems that the aristocracy of Berne applied it to themselves, and have since prohibited the reading of French newspapers. [Paine's note.]

to any individual in a government, he becomes the center round which every kind of corruption generates and forms. Give to any man a million a year, and add thereto the power of creating and disposing of places at the expense of a country, and the liberties of that country are no longer secure. What is called the splendor of a throne is no other than the corruption of the state. It is made up of a band of parasites living in luxurious indolence out of the public taxes.

When once such a vicious system is established, it becomes the guard and protection of all inferior abuses. The man who is in the receipt of a million a year is the last person to promote a spirit of reform, lest, in the event, it should reach to himself. It is always his interest to defend inferior abuses as so many outworks to protect the citadel; and in this species of political fortification, all the parts have such a common dependence that it is never to be expected they will attack each other.<sup>1</sup>

Monarchy would not have continued so many ages in the

<sup>1</sup>It is scarcely possible to touch on any subject that will not suggest an allusion to some corruption in governments. The simile of "*fortifications*" unfortunately involves with it a circumstance which is directly in point with the matter above alluded to.

Among the numerous instances of abuse which have been acted or protected by governments, ancient or modern, there is not a greater than that of quartering a man and his heirs upon the public, to be maintained at its expense.

Humanity dictates a provision for the poor—but by what right, moral or political, does any government assume to say that the person called the duke of Richmond shall be maintained by the public? Yet, if common report is true, not a beggar in London can purchase his wretched pittance of coal without paying towards the civil list of the duke of Richmond. Were the whole produce of this imposition but a shilling a year, the iniquitous principle would be still the same—but when it amounts, as it is said to do, to not less than twenty thousand pounds per ann. the enormity is too serious to be permitted to remain.—This is one of the effects of monarchy and aristocracy.

In stating this case, I am led by no personal dislike. Though I think it mean in any man to live upon the public, the vice originates in the government; and so general is it become that whether the parties are in the ministry or in the opposition it makes no difference; they are sure of the guarantee of each other. [Paine's note.]

world had it not been for the abuses it protects. It is the master-fraud which shelters all others. By admitting a participation of the spoil, it makes itself friends; and when it ceases to do this, it will cease to be the idol of courtiers.

As the principle on which constitutions are now formed rejects all hereditary pretensions to government, it also rejects all that catalogue of assumptions known by the name of prerogatives.

If there is any government where prerogatives might with apparent safety be intrusted to any individual, it is in the federal government of America. The president of the United States of America is elected only for four years. He is not only responsible in the general sense of the word, but a particular mode is laid down in the constitution for trying him. He cannot be elected under thirty-five years of age; and he must be a native of the country.

In a comparison of these cases with the government of England, the difference when applied to the latter amounts to an absurdity. In England, the person who exercises the prerogative is often a foreigner; always half a foreigner, and always married to a foreigner. He is never in full natural or political connection with the country, is not responsible for anything, and becomes of age at eighteen years; yet such a person is permitted to form foreign alliances without even the knowledge of the nation; and to make war and peace without its consent.

But this is not all. Though such a person cannot dispose of the government, in the manner of a testator, he dictates the marriage connections which, in effect, accomplishes a great part of the same end. He cannot directly bequeath half the government to Prussia, but he can form a marriage partnership that will produce the same effect. Under such circumstances, it is happy for England that she is not situated on the continent, or she might, like Holland, fall under the dictatorship of Prussia. Holland, by marriage, is as effectually governed by Prussia as if the old tyranny of bequeathing the government had been the means.

The presidency in America (or, as it is sometimes called, the executive) is the only office from which a foreigner is excluded; and in England it is the only one to which he is admitted. A foreigner cannot be a member of parliament, but he may be what is called a king. If there is any reason for excluding foreigners, it ought to be from those offices where most mischief can be acted, and where, by uniting every bias of interest and attachment, the trust is best secured.

But as nations proceed in the great business of forming constitutions they will examine with more precision into the nature and business of that department which is called the executive. What the legislative and judicial departments are, everyone can see; but with respect to what, in Europe, is called the executive, as distinct from those two, it is either a political superfluity or a chaos of unknown things.

Some kind of official department, to which reports shall be made from different parts of the nation, or from abroad, to be laid before the national representatives, is all that is necessary; but there is no consistency in calling this the executive; neither can it be considered in any other light than as inferior to the legislature. The sovereign authority in any country is the power of making laws, and everything else is an official department.

Next to the arrangement of the principles and the organization of the several parts of a constitution is the provision to be made for the support of the persons to whom the nation shall confide the administration of the constitutional powers.

A nation can have no right to the time and services of any person at his own expense, whom it may choose to employ or intrust in any department whatever; neither can any reason be given for making provision for the support of any one part of the government and not for the other.

But, admitting that the honor of being intrusted with any part of a government is to be considered a sufficient reward, it ought to be so to every person alike. If the members of the legislature of any country are to serve at their own expense, that which is called the executive, whether monarchical or by

any other name, ought to serve in like manner. It is inconsistent to pay the one, and accept the service of the other gratis.

In America every department in the government is decently provided for; but no one is extravagantly paid. Every member of congress and of the state assemblies is allowed a sufficiency for his expenses. Whereas in England, a most prodigal provision is made for the support of one part of the government and none for the other; the consequence of which is that the one is furnished with the means of corruption, and the other is put into the condition of being corrupted. Less than a fourth part of such expense, applied as it is in America, would remedy a great part of the corruption.

Another reform in the American constitutions is the exploding all oaths of personality. The oath of allegiance is to the nation only. The putting any individual as a figure for a nation is improper. The happiness of a nation is the first object, and therefore the intention of an oath of allegiance ought not to be obscured by being figuratively taken to, or in the name of, any person. The oath, called the civic oath, in France, *viz.* the "*nation, the law, and the king,*" is improper. If taken at all it ought to be, as in America, to the nation only. The law may or may not be good; but, in this place, it can have no other meaning than as being conducive to the happiness of the nation, and therefore is included in it. The remainder of the oath is improper, on the ground that all personal oaths ought to be abolished. They are the remains of tyranny on one part, and slavery on the other; and the name of the Creator ought not to be introduced to witness the degradation of his creation; or if taken, as is already mentioned, as figurative of the nation, it is in this place redundant. But whatever apology may be made for oaths at the first establishment of a government, they ought not to be permitted afterwards. If a government requires the support of oaths, it is a sign that it is not worth supporting, and ought not to be supported. Make government what it ought to be, and it will support itself.

To conclude this part of the subject. One of the greatest

improvements that has been made for the perpetual security and progress of constitutional liberty is the provision which the new constitutions make for occasionally revising, altering, and amending them.

The principle upon which Mr. Burke formed his political creed, that "*of binding and controlling posterity to the end of time, and renouncing and abdicating the rights of all posterity forever,*" is now become too detestable to be made a subject of debate; and, therefore, I pass it over with no other notice than exposing it.

Government is but now beginning to be known. Hitherto it has been the mere exercise of power which forbid all effectual inquiry into rights, and grounded itself wholly on possession. While the enemy of liberty was its judge, the progress of its principles must have been small indeed.

The constitutions of America, and also that of France, have either fixed a period for their revision or laid down the mode by which improvements shall be made. It is perhaps impossible to establish anything that combines principles with opinions and practice, which the progress of circumstances, through a length of years, will not in some measure derange or render inconsistent; and, therefore, to prevent inconveniences accumulating, till they discourage reformation or provoke revolutions, it is best to regulate them as they occur. The rights of man are the rights of all generations of men, and cannot be monopolized by any. That which is worth following, will be followed for the sake of its worth; and it is in this that its security lies, and not in any conditions with which it may be incumbered. When a man leaves property to his heirs, he does not connect it with an obligation that they shall accept it. Why then should we do otherwise with respect to constitutions?

The best constitution that could now be devised, consistent with the condition of the present moment, may be far short of that excellence which a few years may afford. There is a morning of reason rising upon man, on the subject of government, that has not appeared before. As the barbarism of the

present old governments expires, the moral condition of nations with respect to each other will be changed. Man will not be brought up with the savage idea of considering his species as enemies because the accident of birth gave the individuals existence in countries distinguished by different names; and as constitutions have always some relation to external as well as to domestic circumstances, the means of benefiting by every change, foreign or domestic, should be a part of every constitution.

We already see an alteration in the national disposition of England and France towards each other, which, when we look back only a few years, is itself a revolution. Who could have foreseen, or who would have believed, that a French national assembly would ever have been a popular toast in England, or that a friendly alliance of the two nations should become the wish of either? It shows that man, were he not corrupted by governments, is naturally the friend of man, and that human nature is not of itself vicious. That spirit of jealousy and ferocity, which the governments of the two countries inspired and which they rendered subservient to the purpose of taxation, is now yielding to the dictates of reason, interest, and humanity. The trade of courts is beginning to be understood, and the affectation of mystery, with all the artificial sorcery by which they imposed upon mankind, is on the decline. It has received its death wound; and though it may linger, it will expire.

Government ought to be as much open to improvement as anything which appertains to man, instead of which it has been monopolized from age to age by the most ignorant and vicious of the human race. Need we any other proof of their wretched management than the excess of debts and taxes with which every nation groans, and the quarrels into which they have precipitated the world?

Just emerging from such a barbarous condition, it is too soon to determine to what extent of improvement government may yet be carried. For what we can foresee, all Europe may form but one great republic, and man be free of the whole.

CHAPTER V. WAYS AND MEANS OF IMPROVING  
THE CONDITION OF EUROPE: INTERSPERSED  
WITH MISCELLANEOUS OBSERVATIONS

In contemplating a subject that embraces with equatorial magnitude the whole region of humanity, it is impossible to confine the pursuit in any one single direction. It takes ground on every character and condition that appertains to man, and blends the individual, the nation, and the world.

From a small spark, kindled in America, a flame has arisen not to be extinguished. Without consuming, like the *ultima ratio regum*, it winds its progress from nation to nation, and conquers by a silent operation. Man finds himself changed, he scarcely perceives how. He acquires a knowledge of his rights by attending justly to his interest, and discovers in the event that the strength and powers of despotism consist wholly in the fear of resisting it, and that, in order "*to be free, it is sufficient that he wills it.*"

Having in all the preceding parts of this work endeavored to establish a system of principles as a basis on which governments ought to be erected, I shall proceed in this, to the ways and means of rendering them into practice. But in order to introduce this part of the subject with more propriety and stronger effect, some preliminary observations, deducible from or connected with those principles, are necessary.

Whatever the form or constitution of government may be, it ought to have no other object than the general happiness. When, instead of this, it operates to create and increase wretchedness in any of the parts of society, it is on a wrong system, and reformation is necessary.

Customary language has classed the condition of man under the two descriptions of civilized and uncivilized life. To the one it has ascribed felicity and affluence; to the other, hardship and want. But however our imagination may be impressed by painting and comparison, it is nevertheless true that a great portion of mankind, in what are called civilized countries, are in a state of poverty and wretchedness far below the condition of an

Indian. I speak not of one country, but of all. It is so in England, it is so all over Europe. Let us inquire into the cause.

It lies not in any natural defect in the principles of civilization, but in preventing those principles having a universal operation; the consequence of which is a perpetual system of war and expense that drains the country and defeats the general felicity of which civilization is capable.

All the European governments (France now excepted) are constructed, not on the principle of universal civilization, but on the reverse of it. So far as those governments relate to each other, they are in the same condition as we conceive of savage uncivilized life; they put themselves beyond the law as well of God as of man, and are, with respect to principle and reciprocal conduct, like so many individuals in a state of nature.

The inhabitants of every country, under the civilization of laws, easily associate together; but governments being in an uncivilized state and almost continually at war, they pervert the abundance which civilized life produces, to carry on the uncivilized part to a greater extent. By thus ingrafting the barbarism of government upon the internal civilization of a country, it draws from the latter, and more especially from the poor, a great portion of those earnings which should be applied to their own subsistence and comfort. Apart from all reflections of morality and philosophy, it is a melancholy fact that more than one fourth of the labor of mankind is annually consumed by this barbarous system.

What has served to continue this evil is the pecuniary advantage which all the governments of Europe have found in keeping up this state of uncivilization. It affords to them pretenses for power and revenue, for which there would be neither occasion nor apology, if the circle of civilization were rendered complete. Civil government alone, or the government of laws, is not productive of pretenses for many taxes; it operates at home, directly under the eye of the country, and precludes the possibility of much imposition. But when the scene is laid in the uncivilized contention of governments, the field of pretenses is enlarged, and the country, being no longer a

judge, is open to every imposition which governments please to act.

Not a thirtieth, scarcely a fortieth part of the taxes which are raised in England are either occasioned by, or applied to, the purposes of civil government. It is not difficult to see that the whole which the actual government does in this respect is to enact laws, and that the country administers and executes them, at its own expense, by means of magistrates, juries, sessions, and assize, over and above the taxes which it pays.

In this view of the case, we have two distinct characters of government; the one, the civil government, or the government of laws, which operates at home; the other, the court or cabinet government, which operates abroad on the rude plan of uncivilized life; the one attended with little charge, the other with boundless extravagance; and so distinct are the two that if the latter were to sink, as it were by a sudden opening of the earth, and totally disappear, the former would not be deranged. It would still proceed because it is the common interest of the nation that it should, and all the means are in practice.

Revolutions, then, have for their object a change in the moral condition of governments, and with this change the burden of public taxes will lessen, and civilization will be left to the enjoyment of that abundance of which it is now deprived.

In contemplating the whole of this subject, I extend my views into the department of commerce. In all my publications, where the matter would admit, I have been an advocate for commerce, because I am a friend to its effects. It is a pacific system, operating to unite mankind by rendering nations, as well as individuals, useful to each other. As to mere theoretical reformation, I have never preached it up. The most effectual process is that of improving the condition of man by means of his interest; and it is on this ground that I take my stand.

If commerce were permitted to act to the universal extent it is capable of, it would extirpate the system of war, and produce a revolution in the uncivilized state of governments. The invention of commerce has arisen since those governments began, and is the greatest approach towards universal civilization that

must necessarily be contemplated as a reciprocal thing, that only one half its powers resides within the nation, and that the whole is as effectually destroyed by destroying the half that resides without, as if the destruction had been committed on that which is within, for neither can act without the other.

When in the last, as well as in former wars, the commerce of England sunk, it was because the general quantity was lessened everywhere; and it now rises because commerce is in a rising state in every nation. If England at this day imports and exports more than at any other period, the nation with which she trades must necessarily do the same; her imports are their exports, and *vice versa*.

There can be no such thing as a nation flourishing alone in commerce; she can only participate; and the destruction of it in any part must necessarily affect all. When, therefore, governments are at war, the attack is made upon the common stock of commerce, and the consequence is the same as if each had attacked his own.

The present increase of commerce is not to be attributed to ministers, or to any political contrivances, but to its own natural operations in consequence of peace. The regular markets had been destroyed, the channels of trade broken up, and the high road of the seas infested with robbers of every nation, and the attention of the world called to other objects. Those interruptions have ceased, and peace has restored the deranged condition of things to their proper order.<sup>1</sup>

It is worth remarking that every nation reckons the balance of trade in its own favor; and therefore something must be irregular in the common ideas upon this subject.

<sup>1</sup>In America the increase of commerce is greater in proportion than in England. It is, at this time, at least one half more than at any period prior to the revolution. The greatest number of vessels cleared out of the port of Philadelphia before the commencement of the war was between eight and nine hundred. In the year 1788 the number was upwards of twelve hundred. As the state of Pennsylvania is estimated as an eighth part of the United States in population, the whole number of vessels must now be nearly ten thousand. [Paine's note.]

The fact, however, is true according to what is called a balance; and it is from this cause that commerce is universally supported. Every nation feels the advantage, or it would abandon the practice; but the deception lies in the mode of making up the accounts, and in attributing what are called profits to a wrong cause.

Mr. Pitt has sometimes amused himself, by showing what he called a balance of trade from the customhouse books. This mode of calculation not only affords no rule that is true, but one that is false.

In the first place, every cargo that departs from the customhouse appears on the books as an export; and according to the customhouse balance the losses at sea and by foreign failures are all reckoned on the side of the profit, because they appear as exports.

Second, Because the importation by the smuggling trade does not appear on the customhouse books, to arrange against the exports.

No balance, therefore, as applying to superior advantages, can be drawn from these documents; and if we examine the natural operation of commerce, the idea is fallacious; and if true, would soon be injurious. The great support of commerce consists in the balance being a level of benefits among all nations.

Two merchants of different nations trading together will both become rich, and each makes the balance in his own favor; consequently, they do not get rich out of each other; and it is the same with respect to the nations in which they reside. The case must be that each nation must get rich out of its own means, and increase that riches by something which it procures from another in exchange.

If a merchant in England sends an article of English manufacture abroad which costs him a shilling at home, and imports something which sells for two, he makes a balance of one shilling in his own favor; but this is not gained out of the foreign nation or the foreign merchant, for he also does the same by the article he receives, and neither has a balance of advan-

tage upon the other. The original value of the two articles in their proper countries were but two shillings; but by changing their places they acquire a new idea of value equal to double what they had at first, and that increased value is equally divided.

There is no otherwise a balance on foreign than on domestic commerce. The merchants of London and Newcastle trade on the same principle as if they resided in different nations, and make their balances in the same manner: yet London does not get rich out of Newcastle any more than Newcastle out of London: but coals, the merchandise of Newcastle, have an additional value at London, and London merchandise has the same at Newcastle.

Though the principle of all commerce is the same, the domestic, in a national view, is the part the most beneficial; because the whole of the advantages on both sides rest within the nation; whereas in foreign commerce, it is only a participation of one half.

The most unprofitable of all commerce is that connected with foreign dominion. To a few individuals it may be beneficial, merely because it is commerce; but to the nation it is a loss. The expense of maintaining dominion more than absorbs the profits of any trade. It does not increase the general quantity in the world, but operates to lessen it; and as a greater mass would be afloat by relinquishing dominion, the participation without the expense would be more valuable than a greater quantity with it.

But it is impossible to engross commerce by dominion; and therefore it is still more fallacious. It cannot exist in confined channels, and necessarily breaks out by regular or irregular means that defeat the attempt, and to succeed would be still worse. France, since the revolution, has been more than indifferent as to foreign possessions; and other nations will become the same when they investigate the subject with respect to commerce.

To the expense of dominion is to be added that of navies, and when the amount of the two is subtracted from the profits

of commerce it will appear that what is called the balance of trade, even admitting it to exist, is not enjoyed by the nation, but absorbed by the government.

The idea of having navies for the protection of commerce is delusive. It is putting the means of destruction for the means of protection. Commerce needs no other protection than the reciprocal interest which every nation feels in supporting it—it is common stock—it exists by a balance of advantages to all; and the only interruption it meets is from the present uncivilized state of governments, and which is its common interest to reform.<sup>1</sup>

Quitting this subject, I now proceed to other matters. As it is necessary to include England in the prospect of a general reformation, it is proper to inquire into the defects of its government. It is only by each nation reforming its own that the whole can be improved and the full benefit of reformation enjoyed. Only partial advantages can flow from partial reforms.

France and England are the only two countries in Europe where a reformation in government could have successfully begun. The one secure by the ocean, and the other by the immensity of its internal strength, could defy the malignancy of foreign despotism. But it is with revolutions as with commerce, the advantages increase by their becoming general, and double to either what each would receive alone.

As a new system is now opening to the view of the world, the European courts are plotting to counteract it. Alliances, contrary to all former systems, are agitating, and a common interest of courts is forming against the common interest of man. The combination draws a line that runs throughout Europe and presents a cause so entirely new as to exclude all calculations from former circumstances. While despotism

<sup>1</sup>When I saw Mr. Pitt's mode of estimating the balance of trade in one of his parliamentary speeches, he appeared to me to know nothing of the nature and interest of commerce; and no man has more wantonly tortured it than himself. During a period of peace, it has been shackled with the calamities of war. Three times has it been thrown into stagnation, and the vessels unmanned by impressing, within less than four years of peace. [Paine's note.]

warred with despotism, man had no interest in the contest; but in a cause that unites the soldier with the citizen, and nation with nation, the despotism of courts, though it feels the danger and meditates revenge, is afraid to strike.

No question has arisen within the records of history that pressed with the importance of the present. It is not whether this or that party shall be in or out, or whig or tory, or high or low, shall prevail; but whether man shall inherit his rights, and universal civilization take place—whether the fruits of his labor shall be enjoyed by himself, or consumed by the profligacy of governments—whether robbery shall be banished from courts, and wretchedness from countries.

It is time that nations should be rational and not be governed like animals for the pleasure of their riders. To read the history of kings a man would be almost inclined to suppose that government consisted in stag-hunting, and that every nation paid a million a year to the huntsman. Man ought to have pride or shame enough to blush at being thus imposed upon, and when he feels his proper character, he will. Upon all subjects of this nature there is often passing in the mind a train of ideas he has not yet accustomed himself to encourage and communicate. Restrained by something that puts on the character of prudence, he acts the hypocrite to himself as well as to others. It is, however, curious to observe how soon this spell can be dissolved. A single expression, boldly conceived and uttered, will sometimes put a whole company into their proper feelings, and a whole nation are acted upon in the same manner.

As to the offices of which any civil government may be composed, it matters but little by what names they are described. In the routine of business, as before observed, whether a man be styled a president, a king, an emperor, a senator, or anything else, it is impossible that any service he can perform can merit from a nation more than ten thousand pounds a year; and as no man should be paid beyond his services, so every man of a proper heart will not accept more. Public money ought to be

touched with the most scrupulous consciousness of honor. It is not the produce of riches only, but of the hard earnings of labor and poverty. It is drawn even from the bitterness of want and misery. Not a beggar passes, or perishes in the streets, whose mite is not in that mass.

Were it possible that the congress of America could be so lost to their duty and to the interest of their constituents as to offer general Washington, as president of America, a million a year, he would not and he could not accept it. His sense of honor is of another kind.

When it shall be said in any country in the world, my poor are happy: neither ignorance nor distress is to be found among them; my jails are empty of prisoners, my streets of beggars; the aged are not in want, the taxes are not oppressive; the rational world is my friend, because I am the friend of its happiness: when these things can be said, then may that country boast of its constitution and its government.

Within the space of a few years we have seen two revolutions, those of America and France. In the former the contest was long and the conflict severe; in the latter the nation acted with such a consolidated impulse that, having no foreign enemy to contend with, the revolution was complete in power the moment it appeared. From both those instances it is evident that the greatest forces that can be brought into the field of revolutions are reason and common interest. Where these can have the opportunity of acting, opposition dies with fear or crumbles away by conviction. It is a great standing which they have now universally obtained; and we may hereafter hope to see revolutions, or changes in governments, produced with the same quiet operation by which any measure, determinable by reason and discussion is accomplished.

Formerly when divisions arose respecting governments, recourse was had to the sword and a civil war ensued. That savage custom is exploded by the new system, and reference is had to national conventions. Discussion and the general will

arbitrates the question, and to this private opinion yields with a good grace, and order is preserved uninterrupted.

Some gentlemen have affected to call the principles, upon which this work and the former part of *The Rights of Man* are founded, "a new-fangled doctrine." The question is not whether these principles are new or old, but whether they are right or wrong. Suppose the former, I will show their effect by a figure easily understood.

It is now towards the middle of February. Were I to take a turn into the country, the trees would present a leafless, wintery appearance. As people are apt to pluck twigs as they go along, I perhaps might do the same, and by chance might observe that a *single bud* on that twig had begun to swell. I should reason very unnaturally, or rather not reason at all, to suppose *this* was the *only* bud in England which had this appearance. Instead of deciding thus, I should instantly conclude that the same appearance was beginning or about to begin everywhere; and though the vegetable sleep will continue longer on some trees and plants than on others, and though some of them may not *blossom* for two or three years, all will be in leaf in the summer, except those which are *rotten*. What pace the political summer may keep with the natural, no human foresight can determine. It is, however, not difficult to perceive that the spring is begun.

# THE AGE OF REASON

BEING AN INVESTIGATION OF TRUE  
AND OF FABULOUS THEOLOGY

## PART FIRST

### [DEDICATION]

To My Fellow-Citizens of the  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

I put the following work under your protection. It contains my opinion upon religion. You will do me the justice to remember that I have always strenuously supported the right of every man to his own opinion, however different that opinion might be to mine. He who denies to another this right makes a slave of himself to his present opinion, because he precludes himself the right of changing it.

The most formidable weapon against errors of every kind is reason. I have never used any other, and I trust I never shall.

Your affectionate friend and fellow-citizen,

THOMAS PAINE

*Paris, 8th Pluviose,*

*Second Year of the French Republic, one and indivisible.*

*January 27, O. S. 1794.*

### [CREDO]

It has been my intention for several years past to publish my thoughts upon Religion. I am well aware of the difficulties that attend the subject; and from that consideration had reserved it to a more advanced period of life. I intended it to

be the last offering I should make to my fellow-citizens of all nations, and that at a time when the purity of the motive that induced me to it could not admit of a question, even by those who might disapprove the work.

The circumstance that has now taken place in France, of the total abolition of the whole national order of priesthood and of everything appertaining to compulsive systems of religion and compulsive articles of faith, has not only precipitated my intention, but rendered a work of this kind exceedingly necessary; lest, in the general wreck of superstition, of false systems of government, and false theology, we lose sight of morality, of humanity, and of the theology that is true.

As several of my colleagues, and others of my fellow-citizens of France, have given me the example of making their voluntary and individual profession of faith, I also will make mine; and I do this with all that sincerity and frankness with which the mind of man communicates with itself.

I believe in one God, and no more; and I hope for happiness beyond this life.

I believe in the equality of man, and I believe that religious duties consist in doing justice, loving mercy, and endeavoring to make our fellow-creatures happy.

But lest it should be supposed that I believe many other things in addition to these, I shall, in the progress of this work, declare the things I do not believe and my reasons for not believing them.

I do not believe in the creed professed by the Jewish church, by the Roman church, by the Greek church, by the Turkish church, by the Protestant church, nor by any church that I know of. My own mind is my own church.

All national institutions of churches—whether Jewish, Christian, or Turkish—appear to me no other than human inventions set up to terrify and enslave mankind and monopolize power and profit.

I do not mean by this declaration to condemn those who believe otherwise. They have the same right to their belief as I have to mine. But it is necessary to the happiness of man that

he be mentally faithful to himself. Infidelity does not consist in believing or in disbelieving; it consists in professing to believe what he does not believe.

It is impossible to calculate the moral mischief, if I may so express it, that mental lying has produced in society. When a man has so far corrupted and prostituted the chastity of his mind as to subscribe his professional belief to things he does not believe, he has prepared himself for the commission of every other crime. He takes up the trade of a priest for the sake of gain, and, in order to *qualify* himself for that trade, he begins with a perjury. Can we conceive anything more destructive to morality than this?

Soon after I had published the pamphlet, COMMON SENSE, in America, I saw the exceeding probability that a revolution in the system of government would be followed by a revolution in the system of religion. The adulterous connection of church and state, wherever it had taken place, whether Jewish, Christian, or Turkish, had so effectually prohibited, by pains and penalties, every discussion upon established creeds and upon first principles of religion, that until the system of government should be changed those subjects could not be brought fairly and openly before the world; but that whenever this should be done, a revolution in the system of religion would follow. Human inventions and priestcraft would be detected, and man would return to the pure, unmixed, and unadulterated belief of one God, and no more.

## [CHAPTER II. OF MISSIONS AND REVELATIONS]<sup>1</sup>

Every national church or religion has established itself by pretending some special mission from God, communicated to certain individuals. The Jews have their Moses; the Christians their Jesus Christ, their apostles and saints; and the Turks

<sup>1</sup>The headings for Chapters II-XVIII are translations of those used in the French version of *The Age of Reason*. [H. H. C.]

their Mahomet—as if the way to God was not open to every man alike.

Each of those churches show certain books which they call *revelation*, or the word of God. The Jews say that their word of God was given by God to Moses face to face; the Christians say that their word of God came by divine inspiration; and the Turks say that their word of God (the Koran) was brought by an angel from heaven. Each of those churches accuse the other of unbelief; and, for my own part, I disbelieve them all.

As it is necessary to affix right ideas to words, I will, before I proceed further into the subject, offer some observations on the word *revelation*. Revelation, when applied to religion, means something communicated *immediately* from God to man.

No one will deny or dispute the power of the Almighty to make such a communication, if he pleases. But admitting, for the sake of a case, that something has been revealed to a certain person, and not revealed to any other person, it is revelation to that person only. When he tells it to a second person, a second to a third, a third to a fourth, and so on, it ceases to be a revelation to all those persons. It is a revelation to the first person only, and *hearsay* to every other; and, consequently, they are not obliged to believe it.

It is a contradiction in terms and ideas to call anything a revelation that comes to us at secondhand, either verbally or in writing. Revelation is necessarily limited to the first communication. After this, it is only an account of something which that person says was a revelation made to him; and though he may find himself obliged to believe it, it cannot be incumbent upon me to believe it in the same manner, for it was not a revelation to *me*, and I have only his word for it that it was made to *him*.

When Moses told the children of Israel that he received the two tables of the commandments from the hand of God, they were not obliged to believe him, because they had no other authority for it than his telling them so; and I have no other authority for it than some historian telling me so. The commandments carry no internal evidence of divinity with them.

They contain some good moral precepts, such as any man qualified to be a lawgiver, or a legislator, could produce himself, without having recourse to supernatural intervention.<sup>1</sup>

When I am told that the Koran was written in heaven, and brought to Mahomet by an angel, the account comes too near the same kind of hearsay evidence and secondhand authority as the former. I did not see the angel myself, and therefore I have a right not to believe it.

When also I am told that a woman, called the Virgin Mary, said, or gave out, that she was with child without any cohabitation with a man, and that her betrothed husband, Joseph, said that an angel told him so, I have a right to believe them or not; such a circumstance required a much stronger evidence than their bare word for it; but we have not even this; for neither Joseph nor Mary wrote any such matter themselves. It is only reported by others that *they said so*. It is hearsay upon hearsay, and I do not choose to rest my belief upon such evidence.

It is, however, not difficult to account for the credit that was given to the story of Jesus Christ being the Son of God. He was born at a time when the heathen mythology had still some fashion and repute in the world, and that mythology had prepared the people for the belief of such a story. Almost all the extraordinary men that lived under the heathen mythology were reputed to be the sons of some of their gods. It was not a new thing, at that time, to believe a man to have been celestially begotten; the intercourse of gods with women was then a matter of familiar opinion. Their Jupiter, according to their accounts, had cohabited with hundreds; the story therefore had nothing in it either new, wonderful, or obscene; it was conformable to the opinions that then prevailed among the people called Gentiles, or mythologists, and it was those people only that believed it. The Jews, who had kept strictly to the belief of one God and no more, and who had always rejected the heathen mythology, never credited the story.

<sup>1</sup>It is, however, necessary to except the declaration which says that God visits the sins of the fathers upon the children. This is contrary to every principle of moral justice. [Paine's note.]

It is curious to observe how the theory of what is called the Christian church sprung out of the tail of the heathen mythology. A direct incorporation took place, in the first instance, by making the reputed founder to be celestially begotten. The trinity of gods that then followed was no other than a reduction of the former plurality, which was about twenty or thirty thousand. The statue of Mary succeeded the statue of Diana of Ephesus. The deification of heroes changed into the canonization of saints. The mythologists had gods for everything; the Christian mythologists had saints for everything. The church became as crowded with the one as the pantheon had been with the other; and Rome was the place of both. The Christian theory is little else than the idolatry of the ancient mythologists, accommodated to the purposes of power and revenue; and it yet remains to reason and philosophy to abolish the amphibious fraud.

[CHAPTER III. CONCERNING THE CHARACTER OF JESUS CHRIST AND HIS HISTORY]

Nothing that is here said can apply, even with the most distant disrespect, to the real character of Jesus Christ. He was a virtuous and an amiable man. The morality that he preached and practiced was of the most benevolent kind; and though similar systems of morality had been preached by Confucius, and by some of the Greek philosophers, many years before, by the Quakers since, and by many good men in all ages, it has not been exceeded by any.

Jesus Christ wrote no account of himself, of his birth, parentage, or anything else. Not a line of what is called the New Testament is of his writing. The history of him is altogether the work of other people; and as to the account given of his resurrection and ascension, it was the necessary counterpart to the story of his birth. His historians, having brought him into the world in supernatural manner, were obliged to take him out again in the same manner, or the first part of the story must have fallen to the ground.

The wretched contrivance with which this latter part is told exceeds everything that went before it. The first part, that of the miraculous conception, was not a thing that admitted of publicity; and therefore the tellers of this part of the story had this advantage, that though they might not be credited they could not be detected. They could not be expected to prove it, because it was not one of those things that admitted of proof, and it was impossible that the person of whom it was told could prove it himself.

But the resurrection of a dead person from the grave, and his ascension through the air, is a thing very different, as to the evidence it admits of, to the invisible conception of a child in the womb. The resurrection and ascension, supposing them to have taken place, admitted of public and ocular demonstration, like that of the ascension of a balloon, or the sun at noonday, to all Jerusalem at least. A thing which everybody is required to believe requires that the proof and evidence of it should be equal to all, and universal; and as the public visibility of this last related act was the only evidence that could give sanction to the former part, the whole of it falls to the ground because that evidence never was given. Instead of this, a small number of persons, not more than eight or nine, are introduced as proxies for the whole world, to say they *saw it*, and all the rest of the world are called upon to believe it. But it appears that Thomas did not believe the resurrection; and, as they say, would not believe without having ocular and manual demonstration himself. *So neither will I*; and the reason is equally as good for me, and for every other person, as for Thomas.

It is in vain to attempt to palliate or disguise this matter. The story, so far as relates to the supernatural part, has every mark of fraud and imposition stamped upon the face of it. Who were the authors of it is as impossible for us now to know as it is for us to be assured that the books in which the account is related were written by the persons whose names they bear. The best surviving evidence we now have respecting this affair is the Jews. They are regularly descended from the people who lived in the times this resurrection and ascension is said to

have happened, and they say, *it is not true*. It has long appeared to me a strange inconsistency to cite the Jews as a proof of the truth of the story. It is the same as if a man were to say, I will prove the truth of what I have told you by producing the people who say it is false.

That such a person as Jesus Christ existed, and that he was crucified, which was the mode of execution at that day, are historical relations strictly within the limits of probability. He preached most excellent morality, and the equality of man; but he preached also against the corruptions and avarice of the Jewish priests; and this brought upon him the hatred and vengeance of the whole order of priesthood. The accusation which those priests brought against him was that of sedition and conspiracy against the Roman government, to which the Jews were then subject and tributary; and it is not improbable that the Roman government might have some secret apprehension of the effects of his doctrine as well as the Jewish priests; neither is it improbable that Jesus Christ had in contemplation the delivery of the Jewish nation from the bondage of the Romans. Between the two, however, this virtuous reformer and revolutionist lost his life.

#### [CHAPTER IV. OF THE BASES OF CHRISTIANITY]

It is upon this plain narrative of facts, together with another case I am going to mention, that the Christian mythologists, calling themselves the Christian church, have erected their fable, which for absurdity and extravagance is not exceeded by anything that is to be found in the mythology of the ancients.

The ancient mythologists tell that the race of Giants made war against Jupiter, and that one of them threw an hundred rocks against him at one throw; that Jupiter defeated him with thunder and confined him afterwards under Mount Etna, and that every time the Giant turns himself, Mount Etna belches fire. It is here easy to see that the circumstance of the mountain, that of its being a volcano, suggested the idea of the

fable; and that the fable is made to fit and wind itself up with that circumstance.

The Christian mythologists tell that their Satan made war against the Almighty, who defeated him and confined him afterwards, not under a mountain, but in a pit. It is here easy to see that the first fable suggested the idea of the second; for the fable of Jupiter and the Giants was told many hundred years before that of Satan.

Thus far the ancient and the Christian mythologists differ very little from each other. But the latter have contrived to carry the matter much farther. They have contrived to connect the fabulous part of the story of Jesus Christ with the fable originating from Mount Etna; and, in order to make all the parts of the story tie together, they have taken to their aid the tradition of the Jews; for the Christian mythology is made up partly from the ancient mythology and partly from the Jewish traditions.

The Christian mythologists, after having confined Satan in a pit, were obliged to let him out again to bring on the sequel of the fable. He is then introduced into the garden of Eden in the shape of a snake, or a serpent, and in that shape he enters into familiar conversation with Eve, who is not in any way surprised to hear a snake talk, and the issue of this *tête-à-tête* is that he persuades her to eat an apple, and the eating of that apple damns all mankind.

After giving Satan this triumph over the whole creation, one would have supposed that the church mythologists would have been kind enough to send him back again to the pit; or, if they had not done this, that they would have put a mountain upon him (for they say that their faith can remove a mountain) or have put him *under* a mountain, as the former mythologists had done, to prevent his getting again among the women and doing more mischief. But instead of this, they leave him at large without even obliging him to give his parole. The secret of which is that they could not do without him; and after being at the trouble of making him, they bribed him to stay. They promised him ALL the Jews, ALL the Turks by anticipa-

tion, nine-tenths of the world beside, and Mahomet into the bargain. After this, who can doubt the bountifulness of the Christian mythology?

Having thus made an insurrection and a battle in heaven, in which none of the combatants could be either killed or wounded—put Satan into the pit—let him out again—given him a triumph over the whole creation—damned all mankind by the eating of an apple, these Christian mythologists bring the two ends of their fable together. They represent this virtuous and amiable man, Jesus Christ, to be at once both God and man, and also the Son of God, celestially begotten on purpose to be sacrificed, because they say that Eve in her longing had eaten an apple.

#### [CHAPTER V. EXAMINATION IN DETAIL OF THE PRECEDING BASES]

Putting aside everything that might excite laughter by its absurdity, or detestation by its profaneness, and confining ourselves merely to an examination of the parts, it is impossible to conceive a story more derogatory to the Almighty, more inconsistent with his wisdom, more contradictory to his power, than this story is.

In order to make for it a foundation to rise upon, the inventors were under the necessity of giving to the being whom they call Satan a power equally as great, if not greater than they attribute to the Almighty. They have not only given him the power of liberating himself from the pit, after what they call his fall, but they have made that power increase afterwards to infinity. Before this fall they represent him only as an angel of limited existence, as they represent the rest. After his fall he becomes, by their account, omnipresent. He exists everywhere, and at the same time. He occupies the whole immensity of space.

Not content with this deification of Satan, they represent him as defeating by stratagem, in the shape of an animal of the creation, all the power and wisdom of the Almighty. They

represent him as having compelled the Almighty to the *direct necessity* either of surrendering the whole of the creation to the government and sovereignty of this Satan or of capitulating for its redemption by coming down upon earth and exhibiting himself upon a cross in the shape of a man.

Had the inventors of this story told it the contrary way—that is, had they represented the Almighty as compelling Satan to exhibit *himself* on a cross in the shape of a snake as a punishment for his new transgression, the story would have been less absurd, less contradictory. But, instead of this, they make the transgressor triumph and the Almighty fall.

That many good men have believed this strange fable and lived very good lives under that belief (for credulity is not a crime) is what I have no doubt of. In the first place, they were educated to believe it, and they would have believed anything else in the same manner. There are also many who have been so enthusiastically enraptured by what they conceived to be the infinite love of God to man, in making a sacrifice of himself, that the vehemence of the idea has forbidden and deterred them from examining into the absurdity and profaneness of the story. The more unnatural anything is, the more is it capable of becoming the object of dismal admiration.

#### [CHAPTER VI. OF THE TRUE THEOLOGY]

But if objects for gratitude and admiration are our desire, do they not present themselves every hour to our eyes? Do we not see a fair creation prepared to receive us the instant we were born—a world furnished to our hands that cost us nothing? Is it we that light up the sun, that pour down the rain, and fill the earth with abundance? Whether we sleep or wake the vast machinery of the universe still goes on. Are these things, and the blessings they indicate in future, nothing to us? Can our gross feelings be excited by no other subjects than tragedy and suicide? Or is the gloomy pride of man become so intolerable that nothing can flatter it but a sacrifice of the Creator?

I know that this bold investigation will alarm many, but it would be paying too great a compliment to their credulity to forbear it upon that account. The times and the subject demand it to be done. The suspicion that the theory of what is called the Christian church is fabulous is becoming very extensive in all countries; and it will be a consolation to men staggering under that suspicion, and doubting what to believe and what to disbelieve, to see the subject freely investigated. I therefore pass on to an examination of the books called the Old and the New Testament.

[CHAPTER VII. EXAMINATION OF THE  
OLD TESTAMENT]

These books, beginning with Genesis and ending with Revelation (which by the bye is a book of riddles that requires a Revelation to explain it), are, we are told, the word of God. It is, therefore, proper for us to know who told us so, that we may know what credit to give to the report. The answer to this question is that nobody can tell, except that we tell one another so. The case, however, historically, appears to be as follows:

When the church mythologists established their system, they collected all the writings they could find and managed them as they pleased. It is a matter altogether of uncertainty to us whether such of the writings as now appear under the name of the Old and the New Testament are in the same state in which those collectors say they found them; or whether they added, altered, abridged, or dressed them up.

Be this as it may, they decided by *vote* which of the books, out of the collection they had made, should be the word of God and which should not. They rejected several; they voted others to be doubtful, such as the books called the Apocrypha; and those books which had a majority of votes were voted to be the word of God. Had they voted otherwise, all the people, since calling themselves Christians, had believed otherwise—for the belief of the one comes from the vote of the other. Who the people were that did all this, we know nothing of; they

called themselves by the general name of the church; and this is all we know of the matter.

As we have no other external evidence or authority for believing those books to be the word of God than what I have mentioned, which is no evidence or authority at all, I come in the next place to examine the internal evidence contained in the books themselves.

In the former part of this essay I have spoken of revelation. I now proceed further with that subject, for the purpose of applying it to the books in question.

Revelation is a communication of something which the person to whom that thing is revealed did not know before. For if I have done a thing, or seen it done, it needs no revelation to tell me I have done it or seen it, nor to enable me to tell it or to write it.

Revelation, therefore, cannot be applied to anything done upon earth of which man is himself the actor or the witness; and consequently all the historical and anecdotal part of the Bible, which is almost the whole of it, is not within the meaning and compass of the word revelation, and therefore is not the word of God.

When Samson ran off with the gateposts of Gaza, if he ever did so (and whether he did or not is nothing to us), or when he visited his Delilah, or caught his foxes, or did anything else, what has revelation to do with these things? If they were facts, he could tell them himself; or his secretary, if he kept one, could write them, if they were worth either telling or writing; and if they were fictions, revelation could not make them true; and whether true or not, we are neither the better nor the wiser for knowing them. When we contemplate the immensity of that Being who directs and governs the incomprehensible WHOLE of which the utmost ken of human sight can discover but a part, we ought to feel ashamed at calling such paltry stories the word of God.

As to the account of the creation, with which the book of Genesis opens, it has all the appearance of being a tradition which the Israelites had among them before they came into

Egypt; and after their departure from that country they put it at the head of their history without telling, as it is most probable they did not know, how they came by it. The manner in which the account opens shows it to be traditionary. It begins abruptly. It is nobody that speaks. It is nobody that hears. It is addressed to nobody. It has neither first, second, nor third person. It has no voucher. Moses does not take it upon himself by introducing it with the formality that he uses on other occasions, such as that of saying, "*The Lord spake unto Moses, saying.*"

Why it has been called the Mosaic account of the creation I am at a loss to conceive. Moses, I believe, was too good a judge of such subjects to put his name to that account. He had been educated among the Egyptians, who were a people as well skilled in science, and particularly in astronomy, as any people of their day; and the silence and caution that Moses observes in not authenticating the account is a good negative evidence that he neither told it nor believed it. The case is that every nation of people has been world-makers, and the Israelites had as much right to set up the trade of world-making as any of the rest; and as Moses was not an Israelite, he might not choose to contradict the tradition. The account, however, is harmless, and this is more than can be said for many other parts of the Bible.

When we read the obscene stories, the voluptuous debaucheries, the cruel and torturous executions, the unrelenting vindictiveness with which more than half the Bible is filled, it would be more consistent that we called it the word of a demon than the word of God. It is a history of wickedness that has served to corrupt and brutalize mankind; and, for my own part, I sincerely detest it, as I detest everything that is cruel.

We scarcely meet with anything, a few phrases excepted, but what deserves either our abhorrence or our contempt, till we come to the miscellaneous parts of the Bible. In the anonymous publications, the Psalms and the book of Job—more particularly in the latter—we find a great deal of elevated sentiment reverentially expressed of the power and benignity of

the Almighty; but they stand on no higher rank than many other compositions on similar subjects, as well before that time as since.

The Proverbs, which are said to be Solomon's, though most probably a collection (because they discover a knowledge of life which his situation excluded him from knowing), are an instructive table of ethics. They are inferior in keenness to the proverbs of the Spaniards, and not more wise and economical than those of the American Franklin.

All the remaining parts of the Bible, generally known by the name of the Prophets, are the works of the Jewish poets and itinerant preachers who mixed poetry, anecdote, and devotion together; and those works still retain the air and style of poetry, though in translation.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>As there are many readers who do not see that a composition is poetry unless it be in rhyme, it is for their information that I add this note.

Poetry consists principally in two things: imagery and composition. The composition of poetry differs from that of prose in the manner of mixing long and short syllables together. Take a long syllable out of a line of poetry and put a short one in the room of it, or put a long syllable where a short one should be, and that line will lose its poetical harmony. It will have an effect upon the line like that of misplacing a note in a song.

The imagery in these books, called the Prophets, appertains altogether to poetry. It is fictitious and often extravagant, and not admissible in any other kind of writing than poetry.

To show that these writings are composed in poetical numbers, I will take ten syllables as they stand in the book and make a line of the same number of syllables (heroic measure) that shall rhyme with the last word. It will then be seen that the composition of these books is poetical measure. The instance I shall produce is from Isaiah:

*"Hear, O ye heavens, and give ear, O earth!"*

'Tis God himself that calls attention forth.

Another instance I shall quote is from the mournful Jeremiah, to which I shall add two other lines for the purpose of carrying out the figure and showing the intention of the poet:

*"Oh! that mine head were waters, and mine eyes"*

Were fountains flowing like the liquid skies;

Then would I give the mighty flood release,

And weep a deluge for the human race. [Paine's note.]

There is not throughout the whole book called the Bible any word that describes to us what we call a poet, nor any word that describes what we call poetry. The case is that the word *prophet*, to which latter times have fixed a new idea, was the Bible word for poet, and the word *prophesying* meant the art of making poetry. It also meant the art of playing poetry to a tune upon any instrument of music.

We read of prophesying with pipes, tabrets, and horns—of prophesying with harps, with psalteries, with cymbals, and with every other instrument of music then in fashion. Were we now to speak of prophesying with a fiddle, or with a pipe and tabor, the expression would have no meaning, or would appear ridiculous, and to some people contemptuous, because we have changed the meaning of the word.

We are told of Saul being among the *prophets*, and also that he prophesied; but we are not told what *they prophesied*, nor what *he prophesied*. The case is, there was nothing to tell; for these prophets were a company of musicians and poets, and Saul joined in the concert; and this was called *prophesying*.

The account given of this affair in the book called Samuel is that Saul met a *company* of prophets—a whole company of them! coming down with a psaltery, a tabret, a pipe, and a harp, and that they prophesied, and that he prophesied with them. But it appears afterwards that Saul prophesied badly; that is, he performed his part badly; for it is said that "*an evil spirit from God*"<sup>1</sup> came upon Saul, and he prophesied.

Now, were there no other passage in the book called the Bible than this to demonstrate to us that we have lost the original meaning of the word *prophesy* and substituted another meaning in its place, this alone would be sufficient; for it is impossible to use and apply the word *prophesy* in the place it is here used and applied, if we give to it the sense which latter

<sup>1</sup>As those men who call themselves divines and commentators are very fond of puzzling one another, I leave them to contest the meaning of the first part of the phrase, that of an *evil spirit from God*, and keep to my text—keep to the meaning of the word *prophesy*. [Paine's note.]

times have affixed to it. The manner in which it is here used strips it of all religious meaning and shows that a man might then be a *prophet*, or he might *prophesy*, as he may now be a poet or musician without any regard to the morality or immorality of his character. The word was originally a term of science, promiscuously applied to poetry and to music, and not restricted to any subject upon which poetry and music might be exercised.

Deborah and Barak are called prophets, not because they predicted anything, but because they composed the poem or song that bears their name in celebration of an act already done! David is ranked among the prophets for he was a musician, and was also reputed to be (though perhaps very erroneously) the author of the Psalms. But Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are not called prophets; it does not appear from any accounts we have that they could either sing, play music, or make poetry.

We are told of the greater and the lesser prophets. They might as well tell us of the greater and the lesser God; for there cannot be degrees in prophesying consistently with its modern sense. But there are degrees in poetry, and therefore the phrase is reconcilable to the case when we understand by it the greater and the lesser poets.

It is altogether unnecessary, after this, to offer any observations upon what those men, styled prophets, have written. The axe goes at once to the root by showing that the original meaning of the word has been mistaken, and consequently all the inferences that have been drawn from those books, the devotional respect that has been paid to them, and the labored commentaries that have been written upon them under that mistaken meaning, are not worth disputing about. In many things, however, the writings of the Jewish poets deserve a better fate than that of being bound up, as they now are, with the trash that accompanies them under the abused name of the word of God.

If we permit ourselves to conceive right ideas of things, we must necessarily affix the idea, not only of unchangeableness,

but of the utter impossibility of any change taking place, by any means or accident whatever, in that which we would honor with the name of the word of God; and therefore the word of God cannot exist in any written or human language.

The continually progressive change to which the meaning of words is subject, the want of a universal language, which renders translations necessary, the errors to which translations are again subject, the mistakes of copyists and printers, together with the possibility of alteration, are of themselves evidences that human language, whether in speech or in print, cannot be the vehicle of the word of God. The word of God exists in something else.

Did the book, called the Bible, excel in purity of ideas and expression all the books now extant in the world, I would not take it for my rule of faith as being the word of God, because the possibility would nevertheless exist of my being imposed upon. But when I see throughout the greater part of this book scarcely anything but a history of the grossest vices, and a collection of the most paltry and contemptible tales, I cannot dishonor my Creator by calling it by his name.

#### [CHAPTER VIII. OF THE NEW TESTAMENT]

Thus much for the Bible; I now go on to the book called the New Testament. The *new* Testament! That is, the *new* will, as if there could be two wills of the Creator.

Had it been the object or the intention of Jesus Christ to establish a new religion, he would undoubtedly have written the system himself or *procured it to be written* in his lifetime. But there is no publication extant authenticated with his name. All the books called the New Testament were written after his death. He was a Jew by birth and profession; and he was the son of God in like manner that every other person is; for the Creator is the Father of all.

The first four books, called Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, do not give a history of the life of Jesus Christ, but only detached anecdotes of him. It appears from these books that the

whole time of his being a preacher was not more than eighteen months; and it was only during this short time that those men became acquainted with him. They make mention of him at the age of twelve years, sitting, they say among the Jewish doctors, asking and answering them questions. As this was several years before their acquaintance with him began, it is most probable they had this anecdote from his parents. From this time there is no account of him for about sixteen years. Where he lived, or how he employed himself during this interval, is not known. Most probably he was working at his father's trade, which was that of a carpenter. It does not appear that he had any school education, and the probability is that he could not write, for his parents were extremely poor as appears from their not being able to pay for a bed when he was born.

It is somewhat curious that the three persons whose names are the most universally recorded were of very obscure parentage. Moses was a foundling, Jesus Christ was born in a stable, and Mahomet was a mule driver. The first and the last of these men were founders of different systems of religion; but Jesus Christ founded no new system. He called men to the practice of moral virtues, and the belief of one God. The great trait in his character is philanthropy.

The manner in which he was apprehended shows that he was not much known at that time; and it shows also that the meetings he then held with his followers were in secret; and that he had given over or suspended preaching publicly. Judas could no otherwise betray him than by giving information where he was, and pointing him out to the officers that went to arrest him; and the reason for employing and paying Judas to do this could arise only from the causes already mentioned—that of his not being much known, and living concealed.

The idea of his concealment not only agrees very ill with his reputed divinity, but associates with it something of pusillanimity; and his being betrayed, or in other words, his being apprehended on the information of one of his followers shows that he did not intend to be apprehended, and consequently that he did not intend to be crucified.

The Christian mythologists tell us that Christ died for the sins of the world, and that he came on *purpose to die*. Would it not then have been the same as if he had died of fever or of the smallpox, of old age, or of anything else?

The declaratory sentence which they say was passed upon Adam, in case he ate of the apple, was not that *thou shalt surely be crucified*, but, *thou shalt surely die*. The sentence was death, and not the *manner of dying*. Crucifixion, therefore, or any other particular manner of dying made no part of the sentence that Adam was to suffer; and consequently, even upon their own tactics, it could make no part of the sentence Christ was to suffer in the room of Adam. A fever would have done as well as a cross, if there was any occasion for either.

This sentence of death, which they tell us was thus passed upon Adam, must either have meant dying naturally—that is, ceasing to live—or have meant what these mythologists call damnation; and consequently the act of dying on the part of Jesus Christ must, according to their system, apply as a prevention to one or other of these two *things* happening to Adam and to us.

That it does not prevent our dying is evident, because we all die; and if their accounts of longevity be true, men die faster since the crucifixion than before; and with respect to the second explanation (including with it the *natural death* of Jesus Christ as a substitute for the *eternal death or damnation* of all mankind), it is impertinently representing the Creator as coming off, or revoking the sentence, by a pun or quibble upon the word *death*. That manufacturer of quibbles, St. Paul, if he wrote the books that bear his name, has helped this quibble on by making another quibble upon the word *Adam*. He makes there to be two Adams—the one who sins in fact, and suffers by proxy; the other who sins by proxy, and suffers in fact. A religion thus interlarded with quibble, subterfuge, and pun has a tendency to instruct its professors in the practice of these arts. They acquire the habit without being aware of the cause.

If Jesus Christ was the Being which those mythologists tell

us he was, and if he came into this world to *suffer*, which is a word they sometimes used instead of to die, the only real suffering he could have endured would have been *to live*. His existence here was a state of exilement or transportation from Heaven, and the way back to his original country was to die. In fine, everything in this strange system is the reverse of what it pretends to be. It is the reverse of truth, and I become so tired with examining into its inconsistencies and absurdities that I hasten to the conclusion of it in order to proceed to something better.

How much or what parts of the books called the New Testament were written by the persons whose names they bear is what we can know nothing of, neither are we certain in what language they were originally written. The matters they now contain may be classed under two heads: anecdote, and epistolary correspondence.

The four books already mentioned—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—are altogether anecdotal. They relate events after they had taken place. They tell what Jesus Christ did and said, and what others did and said to him; and in several instances they relate the same event differently. Revelation is necessarily out of the question with respect to those books; not only because of the disagreement of the writers, but because revelation cannot be applied to the relating of facts by the person who saw them done, nor to the relating or recording of any discourse or conversation by those who heard it. The book, called the Acts of the Apostles, an anonymous work, belongs also to the anecdotal part.

All the other parts of the New Testament, except the book of enigmas called Revelation, are a collection of letters under the name of Epistles; and the forgery of letters has been such a common practice in the world that the probability is at least equal whether they are genuine or forged. One thing, however, is much less equivocal, which is that out of the matters contained in those books, together with the assistance of some old stories, the church has set up a system of religion very contradictory to the character of the person whose name it bears. It

has set up a religion of pomp and of revenue in pretended imitation of a person whose life was humility and poverty.

The invention of a purgatory, and of the releasing of souls therefrom by prayers bought of the church with money, the selling of pardons, dispensations, and indulgences, are revenue laws, without bearing that name or carrying that appearance. But the case nevertheless is that those things derive their origin from the proxyism of the crucifixion and the theory deduced therefrom, which was that one person could stand in the place of another, and could perform meritorious services for him. The probability, therefore, is that the whole theory or doctrine of what is called the redemption (which is said to have been accomplished by the act of one person in the room of another) was originally fabricated on purpose to bring forward and build all those secondary and pecuniary redemptions upon; and that the passages in the books, upon which the idea or theory of redemption is built, have been manufactured and fabricated for that purpose. Why are we to give this church credit when she tells us that those books are genuine in every part, any more than we give her credit for everything else she has told us; or for the miracle she says she has performed? That she *could* fabricate writings is certain, because she could write; and the composition of the writings in question is of that kind that anybody might do it; and that she *did* fabricate them is not more inconsistent with probability than that she should tell us, as she has done, that she could and did work miracles.

Since, then, no external evidence can at this long distance of time be produced to prove whether the church fabricated the doctrine called redemption or not (for such evidence, whether for or against, would be subject to the same suspicion of being fabricated), the case can only be referred to the internal evidence which the thing carries of itself; and this affords a very strong presumption of its being a fabrication. For the internal evidence is that the theory or doctrine of redemption has for its basis an idea of pecuniary justice, and not that of moral justice.

If I owe a person money and cannot pay him, and he threatens to put me in prison, another person can take the debt upon

himself and pay it for me; but if I have committed a crime, every circumstance of the case is changed. Moral justice cannot take the innocent for the guilty, even if the innocent would offer itself. To suppose justice to do this is to destroy the principle of its existence, which is the thing itself. It is then no longer justice. It is indiscriminate revenge.

This single reflection will show that the doctrine of redemption is founded on a mere pecuniary idea corresponding to that of a debt which another person might pay; and as this pecuniary idea corresponds again with the system of second redemptions obtained through the means of money given to the church for pardons, the probability is that the same fabricated both the one and the other of those theories; and that, in truth, there is no such thing as redemption; that it is fabulous and that man stands in the same relative condition with his Maker he ever did stand since man existed; and that it is his greatest consolation to think so.

Let him believe this, and he will live more consistently and morally than by any other system. It is by his being taught to contemplate himself as an outlaw, as an outcast, as a beggar, as a mumper, as one thrown, as it were, on a dunghill at an immense distance from his Creator, and who must make his approaches by creeping and cringing to intermediate beings, that he conceives either a contemptuous disregard for everything under the name of religion, or becomes indifferent, or turns what he calls devout. In the latter case, he consumes his life in grief or the affectation of it. His prayers are reproaches. His humility is ingratitude. He calls himself a worm, and the fertile earth a dunghill, and all the blessings of life by the thankless name of vanities. He despises the choicest gift of God to man, the GIFT OF REASON; and having endeavored to force upon himself the belief of a system against which reason revolts, he ungratefully calls it *human reason*, as if man could give reason to himself.

Yet, with all this strange appearance of humility and this contempt for human reason, he ventures into the boldest presumptions. He finds fault with everything. His selfishness is

never satisfied; his ingratitude is never at end. He takes on himself to direct the Almighty what to do even in the government of the universe. He prays dictatorially. When it is sunshine, he prays for rain; and when it is rain, he prays for sunshine. He follows the same idea in everything that he prays for; for what is the amount of all his prayers but an attempt to make the Almighty change his mind and act otherwise than he does? It is as if he were to say—thou knowest not so well as I.

[CHAPTER IX. IN WHAT THE TRUE REVELATION CONSISTS]

But some perhaps will say: Are we to have no word of God—no revelation? I answer: Yes; there is a word of God; there is a revelation.

THE WORD OF GOD IS THE CREATION WE BEHOLD; and it is in *this word*, which no human invention can counterfeit or alter, that God speaketh universally to man.

Human language is local and changeable, and is therefore incapable of being used as the means of unchangeable and universal information. The idea that God sent Jesus Christ to publish, as they say, the glad tidings to all nations from one end of the earth unto the other, is consistent only with the ignorance of those who knew nothing of the extent of the world, and who believed, as those world-saviors believed and continued to believe for several centuries (and that in contradiction to the discoveries of philosophers and the experience of navigators), that the earth was flat like a trencher; and that a man might walk to the end of it.

But how was Jesus Christ to make anything known to all nations? He could speak but one language, which was Hebrew; and there are in the world several hundred languages. Scarcely any two nations speak the same language, or understand each other; and as to translations, every man who knows anything of languages knows that it is impossible to translate from one language into another, not only without losing a

great part of the original but frequently of mistaking the sense; and, besides all this, the art of printing was wholly unknown at the time Christ lived.

It is always necessary that the means that are to accomplish any end be equal to the accomplishment of that end, or the end cannot be accomplished. It is in this that the difference between finite and infinite power and wisdom discovers itself. Man frequently fails in accomplishing his ends from a natural inability of the power to the purpose; and frequently from the want of wisdom to apply power properly. But it is impossible for infinite power and wisdom to fail as man faileth. The means it useth are always equal to the end; but human language, more especially as there is not a universal language, is incapable of being used as a universal means of unchangeable and uniform information; and therefore it is not the means that God useth in manifesting himself universally to man.

It is only in the CREATION that all our ideas and conceptions of a *word of God* can unite. The creation speaketh a universal language, independently of human speech or human languages, multiplied and various as they be. It is an ever existing original which every man can read. It cannot be forged; it cannot be counterfeited; it cannot be lost; it cannot be altered; it cannot be suppressed. It does not depend upon the will of man whether it shall be published or not; it publishes itself from one end of the earth to the other. It preaches to all nations and to all worlds; and this *word of God* reveals to man all that is necessary for man to know of God.

Do we want to contemplate his power? We see it in the immensity of the creation. Do we want to contemplate his wisdom? We see it in the unchangeable order by which the incomprehensible whole is governed. Do we want to contemplate his munificence? We see it in the abundance with which he fills the earth. Do we want to contemplate his mercy? We see it in his not withholding that abundance even from the unthankful. In fine, do we want to know what God is? Search not the book called the Scripture, which any human hand might make, but the scripture called the Creation.

[CHAPTER X. CONCERNING GOD, AND THE  
LIGHTS CAST ON HIS EXISTENCE AND  
ATTRIBUTES BY THE BIBLE]

The only idea man can affix to the name of God is that of a *first cause*, the cause of all things. And incomprehensibly difficult as it is for man to conceive what a first cause is, he arrives at the belief of it from the tenfold greater difficulty of disbelieving it. It is difficult beyond description to conceive that space can have no end; but it is more difficult to conceive an end. It is difficult beyond the power of man to conceive an eternal duration of what we call time; but it is more impossible to conceive a time when there shall be no time. In like manner of reasoning, everything we behold carries in itself the internal evidence that it did not make itself. Every man is an evidence to himself that he did not make himself; neither could his father make himself, nor his grandfather, nor any of his race; neither could any tree, plant, or animal make itself; and it is the conviction arising from this evidence that carries us on, as it were, by necessity, to the belief of a first cause eternally existing, of a nature totally different to any material existence we know of, and by the power of which all things exist; and this first cause, man calls God.

It is only by the exercise of reason that man can discover God. Take away that reason and he would be incapable of understanding anything; and, in this case, it would be just as consistent to read even the book called the Bible to a horse as to a man. How then is it that those people pretend to reject reason?

Almost the only parts of the book called the Bible that convey to us any idea of God are some chapters in Job, and the 19th Psalm; I recollect no other. Those parts are true *deistical* compositions; for they treat of the *Deity* through his works. They take the book of Creation as the word of God; they refer to no other book; and all the inferences they make are drawn from that volume.

I insert, in this place, the 19th Psalm, as paraphrased into

English verse by Addison. I recollect not the prose, and where I write this I have not the opportunity of seeing it.

The spacious firmament on high,  
 With all the blue ethereal sky,  
 And spangled heavens, a shining frame,  
 Their great original proclaim.  
 The unwearied sun, from day to day,  
 Does his Creator's power display,  
 And publishes to every land  
 The work of an Almighty hand.

Soon as the evening shades prevail  
 The moon takes up the wondrous tale,  
 And nightly to the listening earth  
 Repeats the story of her birth;  
 Whilst all the stars that round her burn,  
 And all the planets in their turn,  
 Confirm the tidings as they roll  
 And spread the truth from pole to pole.

What though in solemn silence all  
 Move round the dark terrestrial ball?  
 What though nor real voice, nor sound,  
 Amidst their radiant orbs be found?  
 In reason's ear they all rejoice,  
 And utter forth a glorious voice;  
 Forever singing as they shine,  
 THE HAND THAT MADE US IS DIVINE.

What more does man want to know than that the hand or power that made these things is divine, is omnipotent? Let him believe this with the force it is impossible to repel, if he permits his reason to act, and his rule of moral life will follow of course.

The allusions in Job have, all of them, the same tendency with this Psalm; that of deducing or proving a truth, that would otherwise be unknown, from truths already known.

I recollect not enough of the passages in Job to insert them correctly; but there is one that occurs to me that is applicable to the subject I am speaking upon: "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection?"

I know not how the printers have pointed this passage, for I keep no Bible; but it contains two distinct questions that admit of distinct answers.

First, Canst thou by *searching* find out God? Yes, because, in the first place, I know I did not make myself, and yet I have existence; and by *searching* into the nature of other things, I find that no other thing could make itself; and yet millions of other things exist; therefore it is that I know, by positive conclusion resulting from this search, that there is a power superior to all those things, and that power is God.

Secondly, Canst thou find out the Almighty to *perfection*? No, not only because the power and wisdom he has manifested in the structure of the Creation that I behold is to me incomprehensible; but because even this manifestation, great as it is, is probably but a small display of that immensity of power and wisdom by which millions of other worlds, to me invisible by their distance, were created and continue to exist.

It is evident that both these questions were put to the reason of the person to whom they are supposed to have been addressed; and it is only by admitting the first question to be answered affirmatively that the second could follow. It would have been unnecessary, and even absurd, to have put a second question more difficult than the first, if the first question had been answered negatively. The two questions have different objects; the first refers to the existence of God, the second to his attributes. Reason can discover the one, but it falls infinitely short in discovering the whole of the other.

I recollect not a single passage in all the writings ascribed to the men called apostles that conveys any idea of what God is. Those writings are chiefly controversial; and the gloominess of the subject they dwell upon, that of a man dying in agony on a cross, is better suited to the gloomy genius of a monk in a cell, by whom it is not impossible they were written, than to any man breathing the open air of the Creation. The only passage that occurs to me, that has any reference to the works of God, by which only his power and wisdom can be known,

is related to have been spoken by Jesus Christ as a remedy against distrustful care. "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin." This, however, is far inferior to the allusions in Job and in the nineteenth Psalm; but it is similar in idea, and the modesty of the imagery is correspondent to the modesty of the man.

#### [CHAPTER XI. OF THE THEOLOGY OF THE CHRISTIANS; AND THE TRUE THEOLOGY]

As to the Christian system of faith, it appears to me as a species of atheism; a sort of religious denial of God. It professes to believe in a man rather than in God. It is a compound made up chiefly of manism, with but little deism, and is as near to atheism as twilight is to darkness. It introduces between man and his Maker an opaque body, which it calls a Redeemer, as the moon introduces her opaque self between the earth and the sun; and it produces by this means a religious or an irreligious eclipse of light. It has put the whole orb of reason into shade.

The effect of this obscurity has been that of turning everything upside down and representing it in reverse; and among the revolutions it has thus magically produced, it has made a revolution in theology.

That which is now called natural philosophy, embracing the whole circle of science of which astronomy occupies the chief place, is the study of the works of God, and of the power and wisdom of God and his works, and is the true theology.

As to the theology that is now studied in its place, it is the study of human opinions and of human fancies *concerning* God. It is not the study of God himself in the works that he has made, but in the works or writings that man has made; and it is not among the least of the mischiefs that the Christian system has done to the world that it has abandoned the original and beautiful system of theology, like a beautiful innocent, to distress and reproach, to make room for the hag of superstition.

The book of Job and the 19th Psalm, which even the church admits to be more ancient than the chronological order in which they stand in the book called the Bible, are theological orations conformable to the original system of theology. The internal evidence of those orations proves to a demonstration that the study and contemplation of the works of creation, and of the power and wisdom of God revealed and manifested in those works, make a great part of the religious devotion of the times in which they were written; and it was this devotional study and contemplation that led to the discovery of the principles upon which what are now called sciences are established; and it is to the discovery of these principles that almost all the arts that contribute to the convenience of human life owe their existence. Every principal art has some science for its parent, though the person who mechanically performs the work does not always, and but very seldom, perceive the connection.

It is a fraud of the Christian system to call the sciences *human inventions*; it is only the application of them that is human. Every science has for its basis a system of principles as fixed and unalterable as those by which the universe is regulated and governed. Man cannot make principles; he can only discover them.

For example. Every person who looks at an almanac sees an account when an eclipse will take place, and he sees also that it never fails to take place according to the account there given. This shows that man is acquainted with the laws by which the heavenly bodies move. But it would be something worse than ignorance were any church on earth to say that those laws are a human invention.

It would also be ignorance or something worse to say that the scientific principles, by the aid of which man is enabled to calculate and foreknow when an eclipse will take place, are a human invention. Man cannot invent anything that is eternal and immutable, and the scientific principles he employs for this purpose must be, and are, of necessity, as eternal and immutable as the laws by which the heavenly bodies move, or

it act otherwise. That which, in all such cases, man calls the *effect*, is no other than the principle itself rendered perceptible to the senses.

Since, then, man cannot make principles, from whence did he gain a knowledge of them, so as to be able to apply them not only to things on earth, but to ascertain the motion of bodies so immensely distant from him as all the heavenly bodies are? From whence, I ask, *could* he gain that knowledge but from the study of the true theology?

It is the structure of the universe that has taught this knowledge to man. That structure is an ever-existing exhibition of every principle upon which every part of mathematical science is founded. The offspring of this science is mechanics; for mechanics is no other than the principles of science applied practically. The man who proportions the several parts of a mill uses the same scientific principles as if he had the power of constructing a universe; but as he cannot give to matter that invisible agency by which all the component parts of the immense machine of the universe have influence upon each other and act in motional unison together without any apparent contact, and to which man has given the name of attraction, gravitation, and repulsion, he supplies the place of that agency by the humble imitation of teeth and cogs. All the parts of man's microcosm must visibly touch; but could he gain a knowledge of that agency so as to be able to supply it in practice, we might then say that another *canonical* book of the word of God had been discovered.

If man could alter the properties of the lever, so also could he alter the properties of the triangle; for a lever (taking that sort of lever which is called a steelyard, for the sake of explanation) forms, when in motion, a triangle. The line it descends from (one point of that line being in the fulcrum), the line it descends to, and the chord of the arc which the end of the lever describes in the air, are the three sides of a triangle. The other arm of the lever describes also a triangle; and the corresponding sides of those two triangles, calculated scientifically or measured geometrically, and also the sines, tan-

gents, and secants generated from the angles and geometrically measured, have the same proportions to each other as the different weights have that will balance each other on the lever, leaving the weight of the lever out of the case.

It may also be said that man can make a wheel and axis; that he can put wheels of different magnitudes together and produce a mill. Still the case comes back to the same point, which is that he did not make the principle that gives the wheels those powers. That principle is as unalterable as in the former cases, or rather it is the same principle under a different appearance to the eye.

The power that two wheels of different magnitudes have upon each other is in the same proportion as if the semi-diameters of the two wheels were joined together and made into that kind of lever I have described, suspended at the part where the semi-diameters join; for the two wheels, scientifically considered, are no other than the two circles generated by the motion of the compound lever.

It is from the study of the true theology that all our knowledge of science is derived, and it is from that knowledge that all the arts have originated.

The Almighty lecturer, by displaying the principles of science in the structure of the universe, has invited man to study and to imitation. It is as if he had said to the inhabitants of this globe that we call ours: "I rendered the starry heavens visible, to teach him science and the arts. He can now provide for his own comfort, AND LEARN FROM MY MUNIFICENCE TO BE KIND TO EACH OTHER."

Of what use is it, unless it be to teach man something, that his eye is endowed with the power of beholding to an incomprehensible distance an immensity of worlds revolving in the ocean of space? Of what use is it that this immensity of worlds is visible to man? What has man to do with the Pleiades, with Orion, with Sirius, with the star he calls the North star, with the moving orbs he has named Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Venus, and Mercury, if no uses are to follow from their being visible? A less power of vision would have been sufficient for man, if

the immensity he now possesses were only given to waste itself, as it were, on an immense desert space glittering with shows.

It is only by contemplating what he calls the starry heavens as the book and school of science that he discovers any use in their being visible to him, or any advantage resulting from his immensity of vision. But when he contemplates the subject in this light, he sees an additional motive for saying that *nothing was made in vain*; for in vain would be this power of vision if it taught man nothing.

[CHAPTER XII. THE EFFECTS OF CHRISTIANISM ON EDUCATION. PROPOSED REFORMS]

As the Christian system of faith has made a revolution in theology, so also has it made a revolution in the state of learning. That which is now called learning was not learning originally. Learning does not consist, as the schools now make it to consist, in the knowledge of languages, but in the knowledge of things to which language gives names.

The Greeks were a learned people; but learning with them did not consist in speaking Greek, any more than in a Roman's speaking Latin, or a Frenchman's speaking French, or an Englishman's speaking English. From what we know of the Greeks, it does not appear that they knew or studied any language but their own, and this was one cause of their becoming so learned; it afforded them more time to apply themselves to better studies. The schools of the Greeks were schools of science and philosophy, and not of languages; and it is in the knowledge of the things that science and philosophy teach that learning consists.

Almost all the scientific learning that now exists came to us from the Greeks, or the people who spoke the Greek language. It therefore became necessary for the people of other nations, who spoke a different language, that some among them should learn the Greek language in order that the learning the Greeks had might be made known in those nations by translating the

Greek books of science and philosophy into the mother tongue of each nation.

The study therefore of the Greek language (and in the same manner for the Latin) was no other than the drudgery business of a linguist; and the language thus obtained was no other than the means or, as it were, the tools employed to obtain the learning the Greeks had. It made no part of the learning itself; and was so distinct from it as to make it exceedingly probable that the persons who had studied Greek sufficiently to translate those works—such, for instance, as Euclid's Elements—did not understand any of the learning the works contained.

As there is now nothing new to be learned from the dead languages, all the useful books being already translated, the languages are become useless, and the time expended in teaching and in learning them is wasted. So far as the study of languages may contribute to the progress and communication of knowledge (for it has nothing to do with the *creation* of knowledge), it is only in the living languages that new knowledge is to be found; and certain it is that in general a youth will learn more of a living language in one year than of a dead language in seven; and it is but seldom that the teacher knows much of it himself. The difficulty of learning the dead languages does not arise from any superior abstruseness in the languages themselves, but in their *being dead*, and the pronunciation entirely lost. It would be the same thing with any other language when it becomes dead. The best Greek linguist that now exists does not understand Greek so well as a Grecian plowman did, or a Grecian milkmaid; and the same for the Latin compared with a plowman or a milkmaid of the Romans; and, with respect to pronunciation and idiom, not so well as the cows that she milked. It would therefore be advantageous to the state of learning to abolish the study of the dead languages, and to make learning consist, as it originally did, in scientific knowledge.

The apology that is sometimes made for continuing to teach the dead languages is that they are taught at a time when a child is not capable of exerting any other mental faculty than

that of memory; but this is altogether erroneous. The human mind has a natural disposition to scientific knowledge, and to the things connected with it. The first and favorite amusement of a child, even before it begins to play, is that of imitating the works of man. It builds houses with cards or sticks; it navigates the little ocean of a bowl of water with a paper boat, or dams the stream of a gutter, and contrives something which it calls a mill; and it interests itself in the fate of its works with a care that resembles affection. It afterwards goes to school, where its genius is killed by the barren study of a dead language, and the philosopher is lost in the linguist.

But the apology that is now made for continuing to teach the dead languages could not be the cause, at first, of cutting down learning to the narrow and humble sphere of linguistry; the cause, therefore, must be sought for elsewhere. In all researches of this kind the best evidence that can be produced is the internal evidence the thing carries with itself, and the evidence of circumstances that united with it; both of which, in this case, are not difficult to be discovered.

Putting then aside, as matter of distinct consideration, the outrage offered to the moral justice of God by supposing him to make the innocent suffer for the guilty, and also the loose morality and low contrivance of supposing him to change himself into the shape of a man in order to make an excuse to himself for not executing his supposed sentence upon Adam; putting, I say, those things aside as matter of distinct consideration, it is certain that what is called the Christian system of faith, including in it the whimsical account of the creation; the strange story of Eve, the snake, and the apple; the amphibious idea of a man-god; the corporeal idea of the death of a god; the mythological idea of a family of gods, and the Christian system of arithmetic that three are one and one is three, are all irreconcilable, not only to the divine gift of reason that God has given to man, but to the knowledge that man gains of the power and wisdom of God by the aid of the sciences, and by studying the structure of the universe that God has made.

The setters-up, therefore, and the advocates of the Christian system of faith could not but foresee that the continually progressive knowledge that man would gain, by the aid of science, of the power and wisdom of God, manifested in the structure of the universe and in all the works of creation, would militate against, and call into question, the truth of their system of faith; and therefore it became necessary to their purpose to cut learning down to a size less dangerous to their project, and this they effected by restricting the idea of learning to the dead study of dead languages.

They not only rejected the study of science out of the Christian schools, but they persecuted it; and it is only within about the last two centuries that the study has been revived. So late as 1610, Galileo, a Florentine, discovered and introduced the use of telescopes, and by applying them to observe the motions and appearances of the heavenly bodies, afforded additional means for ascertaining the true structure of the universe. Instead of being esteemed for these discoveries, he was sentenced to renounce them, or the opinions resulting from them, as a damnable heresy. And prior to that time, Virgilius was condemned to be burned for asserting the antipodes, or in other words, that the earth was a globe and habitable in every part where there was land; yet the truth of this is now too well-known even to be told.

If the belief of errors not morally bad did no mischief, it would make no part of the moral duty of man to oppose and remove them. There was no moral ill in believing the earth was flat like a trencher, any more than there was moral virtue in believing it was round like a globe; neither was there any moral ill in believing that the Creator made no other world than this, any more than there was moral virtue in this belief that he made millions, and that the infinity of space is filled with worlds. But when a system of religion is made to grow out of a supposed system of creation that is not true, and to unite itself therewith in a manner almost inseparable therefrom, the case assumes an entirely different ground. It is then that errors, not morally bad, become fraught with the same mis-

chiefs as if they were. It is then that the truth, though otherwise indifferent in itself, becomes an essential by becoming the criterion that either confirms by corresponding evidence, or denies by contradictory evidence, the reality of the religion itself. In this view of the case it is the moral duty of man to obtain every possible evidence that the structure of the heavens or any other part of creation affords with respect to systems of religion. But this the supporters or partisans of the Christian system, as if dreading the result, incessantly opposed, and not only rejected the sciences but persecuted the professors. Had Newton or Descartes lived three or four hundred years ago, and pursued their studies as they did, it is most probable they would not have lived to finish them; and had Franklin drawn lightning from the clouds at the same time, it would have been at the hazard of expiring for it in flames.

Latter times have laid all the blame upon the Goths and Vandals; but however unwilling the partisans of the Christian system may be to believe or to acknowledge it, it is nevertheless true that the age of ignorance commenced with the Christian system. There was more knowledge in the world before that period than for many centuries afterwards; and as to religious knowledge, the Christian system, as already said, was only another species of mythology; and the mythology to which it succeeded was a corruption of an ancient system of theism.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>It is impossible for us now to know at what time the heathen mythology began; but it is certain from the internal evidence that it carries that it did not begin in the same state or condition in which it ended. All the gods of that mythology, except Saturn, were of modern invention. The supposed reign of Saturn was prior to that which is called the heathen mythology, and was so far a species of theism that it admitted the belief of only one God. Saturn is supposed to have abdicated the government in favor of his three sons and one daughter—Jupiter, Pluto, Neptune, and Juno; after this, thousands of other gods and demi-gods were imaginarily created, and the calendar of gods increased as fast as the calendar of saints and the calendar of courts have increased since.

All the corruptions that have taken place in theology and in religion have been produced by admitting of what man calls *revealed religion*. The mythologists pretended to more revealed religion than

It is owing to this long interregnum of science, *and to no other cause*, that we have now to look back through a vast chasm of many hundred years to the respectable characters we call the ancients. Had the progression of knowledge gone on proportionably with the stock that before existed, that chasm would have been filled up with characters rising superior in knowledge to each other; and those ancients we now so much admire would have appeared respectably in the background of the scene. But the Christian system laid all waste; and if we take our stand about the beginning of the sixteenth century, we look back through that long chasm to the times of the ancients as over a vast sandy desert in which not a shrub appears to intercept the vision to the fertile hills beyond.

It is an inconsistency scarcely possible to be credited that anything should exist, under the name of *religion*, that held it to be *irreligious* to study and contemplate the structure of the universe that God had made. But the fact is too well established to be denied. The event that served more than any other to break the first link in this long chain of despotic ignorance is that known by the name of the Reformation by Luther. From that time, though it does not appear to have made any part of the intention of Luther or of those who are called reformers, the sciences began to revive; and liberality, their natural associate, began to appear. This was the only public good the Reformation did; for with respect to religious good, it might as well not have taken place. The mythology still continued

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the Christians do. They had their oracles and their priests, who were supposed to receive and deliver the word of God, verbally, on almost all occasions.

Since then all corruptions down from Moloch to modern predeterminism, and the human sacrifices of the heathens to the Christian sacrifice of the Creator, have been produced by admitting of what is called *revealed religion*, the most effectual means to prevent all such evils and impositions is not to admit of any other revelation than that which is manifested in the book of creation, and to contemplate the creation as the only true and real word of God that ever did or ever will exist; and everything else called the word of God is fable and imposition. [Paine's note.]

the same; and a multiplicity of national popes grew out of the downfall of the Pope of Christendom.

[CHAPTER XIII. COMPARISON OF CHRISTIANISM WITH THE RELIGIOUS IDEAS  
INSPIRED BY NATURE]

Having thus shown from the internal evidence of things the cause that produced a change in the state of learning, and the motive for substituting the study of the dead languages in the place of the sciences, I proceed, in addition to the several observations already made in the former part of this work, to compare, or rather to confront, the evidence that the structure of the universe affords with the Christian system of religion; but, as I cannot begin this part better than by referring to the ideas that occurred to me at an early part of life, and which I doubt not have occurred in some degree to almost every other person at one time or other, I shall state what those ideas were, and add thereto such other matter as shall rise out of the subject, giving to the whole by way of preface a short introduction.

My father being of the Quaker profession, it was my good fortune to have an exceeding good moral education and a tolerable stock of useful learning. Though I went to the grammar school,<sup>1</sup> I did not learn Latin, not only because I had no inclination to learn languages, but because of the objection the Quakers have against the books in which the language is taught. But this did not prevent me from being acquainted with the subjects of all the Latin books used in the school.

The natural bent of my mind was to science. I had some turn, and I believe some talent, for poetry; but this I rather repressed than encouraged, as leading too much into the field of imagination. As soon as I was able I purchased a pair of globes, and attended the philosophical lectures of Martin and

<sup>1</sup>The same school, Thetford in Norfolk, that the present Counsellor Mingay went to, and under the same master. [Paine's note.]

Ferguson, and became afterwards acquainted with Dr. Bevis of the society called the Royal Society, then living in the Temple, and an excellent astronomer.

I had no disposition for what was called politics. It presented to my mind no other idea than is contained in the word Jockeyship. When, therefore, I turned my thoughts towards matters of government, I had to form a system for myself that accorded with the moral and philosophic principles in which I had been educated. I saw, or at least I thought I saw, a vast scene opening itself to the world in the affairs of America; and it appeared to me that unless the Americans changed the plan they were then pursuing with respect to the government of England and declared themselves independent, they would not only involve themselves in a multiplicity of new difficulties, but shut out the prospect that was then offering itself to mankind through their means. It was from these motives that I published the work known by the name of *Common Sense*, which is the first work I ever did publish; and so far as I can judge of myself I believe I should never have been known in the world as an author on any subject whatever, had it not been for the affairs of America. I wrote *Common Sense* the latter end of the year 1775, and published it the first of January, 1776. Independence was declared the fourth of July following.

Any person who has made observations on the state and progress of the human mind by observing his own, cannot but have observed that there are two distinct classes of what are called Thoughts: those that we produce in ourselves by reflection and the act of thinking, and those that bolt into the mind of their own accord. I have always made it a rule to treat those voluntary visitors with civility, taking care to examine, as well I was able, if they were worth entertaining; and it is from them I have acquired almost all the knowledge that I have. As to the learning that any person gains from school education, it serves only like a small capital to put him in the way of beginning learning for himself afterwards. Every person of learning is finally his own teacher, the reason of which is that principles, being of a distinct quality to circum-

stances, cannot be impressed upon the memory; their place of residence is the understanding and they are never so lasting as when they begin by conception. Thus much for the introductory part.

From the time I was capable of conceiving an idea and acting upon it by reflection, I either doubted the truth of the Christian system or thought it to be a strange affair; I scarcely know which it was; but I well remember, when about seven or eight years of age, hearing a sermon read by a relation of mine who was a great devotee of the church, upon the subject of what is called *Redemption by the Death of the Son of God*. After the sermon was ended I went into the garden, and as I was going down the garden steps (for I perfectly recollect the spot) I revolted at the recollection of what I had heard, and thought to myself that it was making God Almighty act like a passionate man that killed his son when he could not revenge himself any other way; and as I was sure a man would be hanged that did such a thing, I could not see for what purpose they preached such sermons. This was not one of that kind of thoughts that had anything in it of childish levity; it was to me a serious reflection, arising from the idea I had that God was too good to do such an action and also too almighty to be under any necessity of doing it. I believe that any system of religion that has anything in it that shocks the mind of a child cannot be a true system.

It seems as if parents of the Christian profession were ashamed to tell their children anything about the principles of their religion. They sometimes instruct them in morals, and talk to them of the goodness of what they call Providence; for the Christian mythology has five deities—there is God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost, the God Providence, and the Goddess Nature. But the Christian story of God the Father putting his son to death, or employing people to do it (for that is the plain language of the story), cannot be told by a parent to a child; and to tell him that it was done to make mankind happier and better is making the story still worse; as if mankind could be improved by the example of

murder; and to tell him that all this is a mystery is only making an excuse for the incredibility of it.

How different is this to the pure and simple profession of Deism! The true Deist has but one Deity; and his religion consists in contemplating the power, wisdom, and benignity of the Deity in his works, and in endeavoring to imitate him in everything moral, scientific, and mechanical.

The religion that approaches the nearest of all others to true Deism, in the moral and benign part thereof, is that professed by the Quakers; but they have contracted themselves too much by leaving the works of God out of their system. Though I reverence their philanthropy, I cannot help smiling at the conceit that if the taste of a Quaker could have been consulted at the creation, what a silent and drab-colored creation it would have been! Not a flower would have blossomed its gaieties nor a bird been permitted to sing.

Quitting these reflections, I proceed to other matters. After I had made myself master of the use of the globes and of the orrery,<sup>1</sup> and conceived an idea of the infinity of space and of the eternal divisibility of matter, and obtained at least a general knowledge of what is called natural philosophy, I began to compare, or as I have before said, to confront the internal evidence those things afford with the Christian system of faith.

Though it is not a direct article of the Christian system that this world that we inhabit is the whole of the habitable creation, yet it is so worked up therewith from what is called the Mosaic account of the Creation, the story of Eve and the apple,

<sup>1</sup>As this book may fall into the hands of persons who do not know what an orrery is, it is for their information I add this note, as the name gives no idea of the uses of the thing. The orrery has its name from the person who invented it. It is a machinery of clockwork representing the universe in miniature, and in which the revolution of the earth round itself and round the sun, the revolution of the moon round the earth, the revolution of the planets round the sun, their relative distances from the sun as the center of the whole system, their relative distances from each other, and their different magnitudes, are represented as they really exist in what we call the heavens. [Paine's note.]

and the counterpart of that story—the death of the Son of God, that to believe otherwise, that is, to believe that God created a plurality of worlds at least as numerous as what we call stars, renders the Christian system of faith at once little and ridiculous and scatters it in the mind like feathers in the air. The two beliefs cannot be held together in the same mind; and he who thinks that he believes in both has thought but little of either.

Though the belief of a plurality of worlds was familiar to the ancients, it is only within the last three centuries that the extent and dimensions of this globe that we inhabit have been ascertained. Several vessels, following the tract of the ocean, have sailed entirely round the world, as a man may march in a circle and come round by the contrary side of the circle to the spot he set out from. The circular dimensions of our world in the widest part, as a man would measure the widest round of an apple, or a ball, is only twenty-five thousand and twenty English miles, reckoning sixty-nine miles and a half to an equatorial degree, and may be sailed round in the space of about three years.<sup>1</sup>

A world of this extent may, at first thought, appear to us to be great; but if we compare it with the immensity of space in which it is suspended like a bubble or balloon in the air, it is infinitely less in proportion than the smallest grain of sand is to the size of the world, or the finest particle of dew to the whole ocean, and is therefore but small; and, as will be hereafter shown, in only *one* of a system of worlds of which the universal creation is composed.

It is not difficult to gain some idea of the immensity of space in which this and all other worlds are suspended, if we follow a progression of ideas. When we think of the size or dimensions of a room, our ideas limit themselves to the walls and there they stop; but when our eye, or our imagination,

<sup>1</sup>Allowing a ship to sail on an average three miles an hour, she would sail entirely round the world in less than one year, if she could sail in a direct circle; but she is obliged to follow the course of the ocean. [Paine's note.]

darts into space—that is, when it looks upwards into what we call the open air—we cannot conceive any walls or boundaries it can have; and if, for the sake of resting our ideas, we suppose a boundary, the question immediately renews itself, and asks, “What is beyond that boundary? and in the same manner, What is beyond the next boundary? and so on until the fatigued imagination returns and says, *There is no end*. Certainly, then, the Creator was not pent for room when he made this world no larger than it is; and we have to seek the reason in something else.

If we take a survey of our own world, or rather of this of which the Creator has given us the use as our portion in the immense system of creation, we find every part of it—the earth, the waters, and the air that surrounds it—filled and, as it were, crowded with life down from the largest animals that we know of to the smallest insects the naked eye can behold, and from thence to others smaller and totally invisible without the assistance of a microscope. Every tree, every plant, every leaf serves not only as a habitation, but as a whole world to some numerous race, till animal existence becomes so exceedingly refined that the effluvia of a blade of grass would be food for thousands.

Since, then, no part of our earth is left unoccupied, why is it to be supposed that the immensity of space is a naked void, lying in eternal waste? There is room for millions of worlds as large or larger than ours, and each of them millions of miles apart from each other.

Having now arrived at this point, if we carry our ideas only one thought further, we shall see, perhaps, the true reason—at least a very good reason for our happiness—why the Creator, instead of making one immense world extended over an immense quantity of space, has preferred dividing that quantity of matter into several distinct and separate worlds which we call planets, of which our earth is one. But before I explain my ideas upon this subject, it is necessary (not for the sake of those that already know, but for those who do not) to show what the system of the universe is.

## [CHAPTER XIV. SYSTEM OF THE UNIVERSE]

That part of the universe that is called the solar system (meaning the system of worlds to which our earth belongs, and of which Sol, or in English language, the sun, is the center) consists, besides the sun, of six distinct orbs, or planets, or worlds, besides the secondary bodies called satellites or moons, of which our earth has one that attends her in her annual revolution round the sun, in like manner as the other satellites or moons attend the planets, or worlds, to which they severally belong, as may be seen by the assistance of the telescope.

The sun is the center round which those six worlds or planets revolve at different distances therefrom and in circles concentric to each other. Each world keeps constantly in nearly the same tract round the sun, and continues at the same time turning round itself in nearly an upright position, as a top turns round itself when it is spinning on the ground and leans a little sideways.

It is this leaning of the earth ( $23\frac{1}{2}$  degrees) that occasions summer and winter and the different length of days and nights. If the earth turned round itself in a position perpendicular to the plane or level of the circle it moves in around the sun, as a top turns round when it stands erect on the ground, the days and nights would be always of the same length, twelve hours day and twelve hours night, and the seasons would be uniformly the same throughout the year.

Every time that a planet (our earth, for example) turns round itself it makes what we call day and night; and every time it goes entirely round the sun it makes what we call a year, consequently our world turns three hundred and sixty-five times round itself in going once round the sun.<sup>1</sup>

The names that the ancients gave to those six worlds, and which are still called by the same names, are Mercury, Venus,

<sup>1</sup>Those who supposed that the sun went round the earth every twenty-four hours made the same mistake in idea that a cook would do in fact that should make the fire go round the meat, instead of the meat turning round itself towards the fire. [Paine's note.]

this world that we call ours, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn. They appear larger to the eye than the stars, being many million miles nearer to our earth than any of the stars are. The planet Venus is that which is called the evening star and sometimes the morning star, as she happens to set after or rise before the sun, which in either case is never more than three hours.

The sun, as before said, being the center, the planet or world nearest the sun is Mercury; his distance from the sun is thirty-four million miles, and he moves round in a circle always at that distance from the sun, as a top may be supposed to spin round in the track in which a horse goes in a mill. The second world is Venus; she is fifty-seven million miles distant from the sun, and consequently moves round in a circle much greater than that of Mercury. The third world is this that we inhabit, and which is eighty-eight million miles distant from the sun, and consequently moves round in a circle greater than that of Venus. The fourth world is Mars; he is distant from the sun one hundred and thirty-four million miles, and consequently moves round in a circle greater than that of our earth. The fifth is Jupiter; he is distant from the sun five hundred and fifty-seven million miles, and consequently moves round in a circle greater than that of Mars. The sixth world is Saturn; he is distant from the sun seven hundred and sixty-three million miles, and consequently moves round in a circle that surrounds the circles, or orbits, of all the other worlds or planets.

The spaces, therefore, in the air, or in the immensity of space, that our solar system takes up for the several worlds to perform their revolutions in round the sun, is of the extent in a straight line of the whole diameter of the orbit or circle in which Saturn moves round the sun, which, being double his distance from the sun, is fifteen hundred and twenty-six million miles; and its circular extent is nearly five thousand million; and its globical content is almost three thousand five hundred million times three thousand five hundred million square miles.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>If it should be asked, How can man know these things? I have one plain answer to give, which is that man knows how to calculate an eclipse and also to calculate to a minute of time when the planet

But this, immense as it is, is only one system of worlds. Beyond this at a vast distance into space, far beyond all power of calculation, are the stars called the fixed stars. They are called fixed because they have no revolutionary motion as the six worlds or planets have that I have been describing. Those fixed stars continue always at the same distance from each other, and always in the same place, as the sun does in the center of our system. The probability, therefore, is that each of those fixed stars is also a sun, round which another system of worlds or planets, though too remote for us to discover, performs its revolutions as our system of worlds does round our central sun.

By this easy progression of ideas, the immensity of space will appear to us to be filled with systems of worlds; and that no part of space lies at waste, any more than any part of our globe of earth and water is left unoccupied.

Having thus endeavored to convey in a familiar and easy manner some idea of the structure of the universe, I return to explain what I before alluded to—namely, the great benefits arising to man in consequence of the Creator having made a *plurality* of worlds, such as our system is, consisting of a central sun and six worlds, besides satellites, in preference to that of creating one world only of a vast extent.

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Venus, in making her revolutions round the sun, will come in a straight line between our earth and the sun and will appear to us about the size of a large pea passing across the face of the sun. This happens but twice in about a hundred years, at the distance of about eight years from each other, and has happened twice in our time, both of which were foreknown by calculation. It can also be known when they will happen again for a thousand years to come or to any portion of time. As, therefore, man could not be able to do those things if he did not understand the solar system, and the manner in which the revolutions of the several planets or worlds are performed, the fact of calculating an eclipse, or a transit of Venus, is a proof of point that the knowledge exists; and as to a few thousand or even a few million miles, more or less, it makes scarcely any sensible difference in such immense distances. [Paine's note.]

[CHAPTER XV. ADVANTAGES OF THE  
EXISTENCE OF MANY WORLDS IN  
EACH SOLAR SYSTEM]

It is an idea I have never lost sight of that all our knowledge of science is derived from the revolutions (exhibited to our eye and from thence to our understanding) which those several planets, or worlds of which our system is composed, make in their circuit round the sun.

Had then the quantity of matter which these six worlds contain been blended into one solitary globe, the consequence to us would have been that either no revolutionary motion would have existed, or not a sufficiency of it to give us the ideas and the knowledge of science we now have; and it is from the sciences that all the mechanical arts that contribute so much to our earthly felicity and comfort are derived.

As, therefore, the Creator made nothing in vain, so also must it be believed that he organized the structure of the universe in the most advantageous manner for the benefit of man; and as we see, and from experience feel, the benefits we derive from the structure of the universe, formed as it is, which benefits we should not have had the opportunity of enjoying if the structure so far as relates to our system had been a solitary globe, we can discover at least one reason why a *plurality* of worlds has been made, and that reason calls forth the devotional gratitude of man as well as his admiration.

But it is not to us, the inhabitants of this globe, only that the benefits arising from a plurality of worlds are limited. The inhabitants of each of the worlds of which our system is composed enjoy the same opportunities of knowledge as we do. They behold the revolutionary motions of our earth, as we behold theirs. All the planets revolve in sight of each other; and, therefore, the same universal school of science presents itself to all.

Neither does the knowledge stop here. The system of worlds next to us exhibits, in its revolutions, the same principles and school of science to the inhabitants of their system as our

system does to us, and in like manner throughout the immensity of space.

Our ideas, not only of the almightiness of the Creator but of his wisdom and his beneficence, become enlarged in proportion as we contemplate the extent and the structure of the universe. The solitary idea of a solitary world, rolling or at rest in the immense ocean of space, gives place to the cheerful idea of a society of worlds so happily contrived as to administer, even by their motion, instruction to man. We see our own earth filled with abundance; but we forget to consider how much of that abundance is owing to the scientific knowledge the vast machinery of the universe has unfolded.

[CHAPTER XVI. APPLICATION OF THE PRE-  
CEDING TO THE SYSTEM OF THE  
CHRISTIANS]

But, in the midst of those reflections, what are we to think of the Christian system of faith that forms itself upon the idea of only one world, and that of no greater extent, as is before shown, than twenty-five thousand miles? An extent which a man, walking at the rate of three miles an hour for twelve hours in the day, could he keep on in a circular direction, would walk entirely round in less than two years. Alas! what is this to the mighty ocean of space and the almighty power of the Creator?

From whence, then, could arise the solitary and strange conceit that the Almighty, who had millions of worlds equally dependent on his protection, should quit the care of all the rest and come to die in our world because, they say, one man and one woman had eaten an apple! And, on the other hand, are we to suppose that every world in the boundless creation had an Eve, an apple, a serpent, and a redeemer? In this case, the person who is irreverently called the Son of God, and sometimes God himself, would have nothing else to do than to travel from world to world, in an endless succession of death, with scarcely a momentary interval of life.

It has been by rejecting the evidence that the word or works of God in the creation afford to our senses, and the action of our reason upon that evidence, that so many wild and whimsical systems of faith and of religion have been fabricated and set up. There may be many systems of religion that, so far from being morally bad, are in many respects morally good; but there can be but ONE that is true; and that one necessarily must, as it ever will, be in all things consistent with the ever-existing word of God that we behold in his works. But such is the strange construction of the Christian system of faith that every evidence the heavens afford to man either directly contradicts it or renders it absurd.

It is possible to believe, and I always feel pleasure in encouraging myself to believe it, that there have been men in the world who persuaded themselves that what is 'called a *pious fraud* might, at least under particular circumstances, be productive of some good. But the fraud, being once established, could not afterwards be explained; for it is with a pious fraud as with a bad action: it begets a calamitous necessity of going on.

The persons who first preached the Christian system of faith, and in some measure combined with it the morality preached by Jesus Christ, might persuade themselves that it was better than the heathen mythology that then prevailed. From the first preachers the fraud went on to the second, and to the third, till the idea of its being a pious fraud became lost in the belief of its being true; and that belief became again encouraged by the interests of those who made a livelihood by preaching it.

But though such a belief might, by such means, be rendered almost general among the laity, it is next to impossible to account for the continual persecution carried on by the church for several hundred years against the sciences and against the professors of science, if the church had not some record of some tradition that it was originally no other than a pious fraud, or did not foresee that it could not be maintained against the evidence that the structure of the universe afforded.

[CHAPTER XVII. OF THE MEANS EMPLOYED  
IN ALL TIME, AND ALMOST UNIVERSALLY,  
TO DECEIVE THE PEOPLES]

Having thus shown the irreconcilable inconsistencies between the real word of God existing in the universe and that which is called *the word of God*, as shown to us in a printed book that any man might make, I proceed to speak of the three principal means that have been employed in all ages, and perhaps in all countries, to impose upon mankind.

Those three means are Mystery, Miracle, and Prophecy. The first two are incompatible with true religion, and the third ought always to be suspected.

With respect to mystery, everything we behold is in one sense a mystery to us. Our own existence is a mystery; the whole vegetable world is a mystery. We cannot account how it is that an acorn, when put into the ground, is made to develop itself and become an oak. We know not how it is that the seed we sow unfolds and multiplies itself, and returns to us such an abundant interest for so small a capital.

The fact, however, as distinct from the operating cause, is not a mystery, because we see it; and we know also the means we are to use, which is no other than putting the seed in the ground. We know, therefore, as much as is necessary for us to know; and that part of the operation that we do not know, and which, if we did, we could not perform, the Creator takes upon himself and performs it for us. We are, therefore, better off than if we had been let into the secret and left to do it for ourselves.

But though every created thing is, in this sense, a mystery, the word mystery cannot be applied to *moral truth* any more than obscurity can be applied to light. The God in whom we believe is a God of moral truth and not a God of mystery or obscurity. Mystery is the antagonist of truth. It is a fog of human invention that obscures truth and represents it in distortion. Truth never envelops *itself* in mystery; and the mystery in which it is enveloped is the work of its antagonist, and never of itself.

Religion, therefore, being the belief of a God and the practice of moral truth, cannot have connection with mystery. The belief of a God, so far from having anything of a mystery in it, is of all beliefs the most easy, because it arises to us, as is before observed, out of necessity. And the practice of moral truth, or in other words a practical imitation of the moral goodness of God, is no other than our acting towards each other as he acts benignly towards all. We cannot *serve* God in the manner we serve those who cannot do without such service; and, therefore, the only idea we can have of serving God is that of contributing to the happiness of the living creation that God has made. This cannot be done by retiring ourselves from the society of the world and spending a recluse life in selfish devotion.

The very nature and design of religion, if I may so express it, prove even to demonstration that it must be free from everything of mystery and unencumbered with everything that is mysterious. Religion, considered as a duty, is incumbent upon every living soul alike and, therefore, must be on a level to the understanding and comprehension of all. Man does not learn religion as he learns the secrets and mysteries of a trade. He learns the theory of religion by reflection. It arises out of the action of his own mind upon the things which he sees or upon what he may happen to hear or to read, and the practice joins itself thereto.

When men, whether from policy or pious fraud, set up systems of religion incompatible with the word or works of God in the creation, and not only above but repugnant to human comprehension, they were under the necessity of inventing or adopting a word that should serve as a bar to all questions, inquiries, and speculations. The word *mystery* answered this purpose; and thus it has happened that religion, which is in itself without mystery, has been corrupted into a fog of mysteries.

As *mystery* answered all general purposes, *miracle* followed as an occasional auxiliary. The former served to bewilder the mind; the latter, to puzzle the senses. - The one was the lingo, the other the legerdemain.

But before going further into this subject, it will be proper to inquire what is to be understood by a miracle.

In the same sense that everything may be said to be a mystery, so also may it be said that everything is a miracle, and that no one thing is a greater miracle than another. The elephant, though larger, is not a greater miracle than a mite, nor a mountain a greater miracle than an atom. To an almighty power it is no more difficult to make the one than the other; and no more difficult to make a million of worlds than to make one. Everything, therefore, is a miracle in one sense, whilst in the other sense, there is no such thing as a miracle. It is a miracle when compared to our power and to our comprehension; it is not a miracle compared to the power that performs it; but as nothing in this description conveys the idea that is affixed to the word miracle, it is necessary to carry the inquiry further.

Mankind have conceived to themselves certain laws by which what they call nature is supposed to act; and that a miracle is something contrary to the operation and effect of those laws; but unless we know the whole extent of those laws, and of what are commonly called the powers of nature, we are not able to judge whether anything that may appear to us wonderful or miraculous be within, or be beyond, or be contrary to her natural power of acting.

The ascension of a man several miles high into the air would have everything in it that constitutes the idea of a miracle, if it were not known that a species of air can be generated several times lighter than the common atmospheric air, and yet possess elasticity enough to prevent the balloon, in which that light air is inclosed, from being compressed into as many times less bulk by the common air that surrounds it. In like manner, extracting flashes or sparks from the human body, as visible as from a steel struck with a flint, and causing iron or steel to move without any visible agent, would also give the idea of a miracle, if we were not acquainted with electricity and magnetism. So also would many other experiments in natural philosophy, to those who are not acquainted with the subject. The restoring persons to life who are to appearance dead, as is

practiced upon drowning persons, would also be a miracle, if it were not known that animation is capable of being suspended without being extinct.

Besides these, there are performances by sleight of hand, and by persons acting in concert, that have a miraculous appearance, which when known are thought nothing of. And, besides these, there are mechanical and optical deceptions. There is now an exhibition in Paris of ghosts and specters which, though it is not imposed upon the spectators as a fact, has an astonishing appearance. As, therefore, we know not the extent to which either nature or art can go, there is no positive criterion to determine what a miracle is; and mankind, in giving credit to appearances under the idea of their being miracles, are subject to be continually imposed upon.

Since, then, appearances are so capable of deceiving and things not real have a strong resemblance to things that are, nothing can be more inconsistent than to suppose that the Almighty would make use of means, such as are called miracles, that would subject the person who performed them to the suspicion of being an imposter, and the persons who related them to be suspected of lying, and the doctrine intended to be supported thereby to be suspected as a fabulous invention.

Of all the modes of evidence that ever were intended to obtain belief to any system or opinion to which the name of religion has been given, that of *miracle*, however successful the imposition may have been, is the most inconsistent. For, in the first place, whenever recourse is had to show for the purpose of procuring that belief (for a miracle, under any idea of the word, is a show), it implies a lameness or weakness in the doctrine that is preached. And, in the second place, it is degrading the Almighty into the character of a showman playing tricks to amuse and make the people stare and wonder. It is also the most equivocal sort of evidence that can be set up; for the belief is not to depend upon the thing called a miracle, but upon the credit of the reporter who says that he saw it; and, therefore, the thing, were it true, would have no better chance of being believed than if it were a lie.

Suppose I were to say that when I sat down to write this book a hand presented itself in the air, took up the pen, and wrote every word as herein written; would anybody believe me? Certainly they would not. Would they believe me a whit more if the thing had been a fact? Certainly they would not. Since, then, a real miracle, were it to happen, would be subject to the same fate as the falsehood, the inconsistency becomes the greater of supposing the Almighty would make use of means that would not answer the purpose for which they were intended, even if they were real.

If we are to suppose a miracle to be something so entirely out of the course of what is called nature that she must go out of that course to accomplish it, and we see an account given of such a miracle by the person who said he saw it, it raises a question in the mind very easily decided, which is, Is it more probable that nature should go out of her course or that a man should tell a lie? We have never seen, in our time, nature go out of her course; but we have good reason to believe that millions of lies have been told in the same time; it is therefore at least millions to one that the reporter of a miracle tells a lie.

The story of the whale swallowing Jonah, though a whale is large enough to do it, borders greatly on the marvelous; but it would have approached nearer to the idea of miracle if Jonah had swallowed the whale. In this, which may serve for all cases of miracles, the matter would decide itself as before stated, namely, Is it more probable that a man should have swallowed a whale or told a lie?

But suppose that Jonah had really swallowed the whale and gone with it in his belly to Nineveh, and to convince the people that it was true, have cast it up in their sight, of the full length and size of a whale, would they not have believed him to have been the devil instead of a prophet? Or, if the whale had carried Jonah to Nineveh and cast him up in the same public manner, would they not have believed the whale to have been the devil, and Jonah one of his imps?

The most extraordinary of all things called miracles, related in the New Testament, is that of the devil flying away with

Jesus Christ, and carrying him to the top of a high mountain, and to the top of the highest pinnacle of the temple, and showing him and promising to him *all the kingdoms of the world*. How happened it that he did not discover America; or is it only with *kingdoms* that his sooty highness has any interest?

I have too much respect for the moral character of Christ to believe he told this whale of a miracle himself; neither is it easy to account for what purpose it could have been fabricated, unless it were to impose upon the connoisseurs of miracles, as is sometimes practiced upon the connoisseurs of Queen Anne's farthings and collectors of relics and antiquities; or to render the belief of miracles ridiculous by outdoing miracle as Don Quixote outdid chivalry; or to embarrass the belief of miracles by making it doubtful by what power, whether of God or of the devil, anything called a miracle was performed. It requires, however, a great deal of faith in the devil to believe this miracle.

In every point of view in which those things called miracles can be placed and considered, the reality of them is improbable, and their existence unnecessary. They would not, as before observed, answer any useful purpose, even if they were true; for it is more difficult to obtain belief to a miracle than to a principle evidently moral without any miracle. Moral principle speaks universally for itself. Miracle could be but a thing of the moment and seen but by a few; and after this it requires a transfer of faith from God to man to believe a miracle upon man's report. Instead, therefore, of admitting the recitals of miracles as evidence of any system of religion being true, they ought to be considered as symptoms of its being fabulous. It is necessary to the full and upright character of truth that it rejects the crutch; and it is consistent with the character of fable to seek the aid that truth rejects. Thus much for mystery and miracle.

As mystery and miracle took charge of the past and the present, prophecy took charge of the future, and rounded the tenses of faith. It was not sufficient to know what had been done, but what would be done. The supposed prophet was

the supposed historian of times to come and if he happened, in shooting with a long bow of a thousand years, to strike within a thousand miles of a mark, the ingenuity of posterity could make it point-blank; and if he happened to be directly wrong, it was only to suppose, as in the case of Jonah and Nineveh, that God had repented himself and changed his mind. What a fool do fabulous systems of religion make of man!

It has been shown in a former part of this work that the original meaning of the words *prophet* and *prophesying* has been changed, and that a prophet, in the sense the word is now used, is a creature of modern invention; and it is owing to this change in the meaning of the words that the flights and metaphors of the Jewish poets, and phrases and expressions now rendered obscure by our not being acquainted with the local circumstances to which they applied at the time they were used, have been erected into prophecies and made to bend to explanations at the will and whimsical conceits of sectaries, expounders, and commentators. Everything unintelligible was prophetic, and everything insignificant was typical. A blunder would have served for a prophecy, and a dishclout for a type.

If by a prophet we are to suppose a man to whom the Almighty communicated some event that would take place in future, either there were such men or there were not. If there were, it is consistent to believe that the event so communicated would be told in terms that could be understood, and not related in such a loose and obscure manner as to be out of the comprehension of those that heard it and so equivocal as to fit almost any circumstance that might happen afterwards. It is conceiving very irreverently of the Almighty to suppose he would deal in this jesting manner with mankind; yet all the things called prophecies in the book called the Bible come under this description.

But it is with prophecy as it is with miracle. It could not answer the purpose even if it were real. Those to whom a prophecy should be told could not tell whether the man prophesied or lied, or whether it had been revealed to him, or whether he conceived it; and if the thing that he prophesied or pretended

to prophesy should happen, or something like it, among the multitude of things that are daily happening, nobody could again know whether he foreknew it, or guessed at it, or whether it was accidental. A prophet, therefore, is a character useless and unnecessary; and the safe side of the case is to guard against being imposed upon by not giving credit to such relations.

Upon the whole, mystery, miracle, and prophecy are appendages that belong to fabulous and not to true religion. They are the means by which so many *Lo, heres!* and *Lo, theres!* have been spread about the world, and religion been made into a trade. The success of one impostor gave encouragement to another, and the quieting salvo of doing *some good* by keeping up a *pious fraud* protected them from remorse.

#### [RECAPITULATION]

Having now extended the subject to a greater length than I first intended, I shall bring it to a close by abstracting a summary from the whole.

First—That the idea or belief of a word of God existing in print, or in writing, or in speech, is inconsistent in itself for the reasons already assigned. These reasons, among others, are the want of a universal language; the mutability of language; the errors to which translations are subject; the possibility of totally suppressing such a word; the probability of altering it, or of fabricating the whole, and imposing it upon the world.

Secondly—That the creation we behold is the real and ever-existing word of God in which we cannot be deceived. It proclaimeth his power, it demonstrates his wisdom, it manifests his goodness and beneficence.

Thirdly—That the moral duty of man consists in imitating the moral goodness and beneficence of God manifested in the creation towards all his creatures. That seeing, as we daily do, the goodness of God to all men, it is an example calling upon all men to practice the same towards each other; and consequently that everything of persecution and revenge between

man and man, and everything of cruelty to animals is a violation of moral duty.

I trouble not myself about the manner of future existence. I content myself with believing, even to positive conviction, that the power that gave me existence is able to continue it in any form and manner he pleases, either with or without this body; and it appears more probable to me that I shall continue to exist hereafter than that I should have had existence, as I now have, before that existence began.

It is certain that in one point all nations of the earth and all religious agree. All believe in a God. The things in which they disagree are the redundancies annexed to that belief; and, therefore, if ever a universal religion should prevail, it will not be believing anything new, but in getting rid of redundancies and believing as man believed at first. Adam, if ever there was such a man, was created a Deist; but in the meantime let every man follow, as he has a right to do, the religion and the worship he prefers.

[AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL INTERLUDE]

Thus far I had written on the 28th of December, 1793. In the evening I went to the Hotel Philadelphia (formerly White's Hotel), Passage des Petits Pères, where I lodged when I came to Paris in consequence of being elected a member of the Convention, but had left the lodging about nine months, and taken lodgings in the Rue Fauxbourg St. Denis, for the sake of being more retired than I could be in the middle of the town.

Meeting with a company of Americans at the Hotel Philadelphia, I agreed to spend the evening with them; and as my lodging was distant about a mile and a half, I bespoke a bed at the hotel. The company broke up about twelve o'clock and I went directly to bed. About four in the morning I was awakened by a rapping at my chamber door; when I opened it, I saw a guard and the master of the hotel with them. The guard told me they came to put me under arrestation and to demand the key of my papers. I desired them to walk in, and I would dress myself and go with them immediately.

It happened that Archilles Audibert, of Calais, was then in the hotel; and I desired to be conducted into his room. When we came there I told the guard that I had only lodged at the hotel for that night; that I was printing a work, and that part of that work was at the Maison Bretagne, Rue Jacob; and desired they would take me there first, which they did.

The printing office at which the work was printing was near the Maison Bretagne, where Colonel Blackden and Joel Barlow, of the United States of America, lodged; and I had desired Joel Barlow to compare the proof sheets with the copy as they came from the press. The remainder of the manuscript from page 32 to 76 was at my lodging. But besides the necessity of my collecting all the parts of the work together that the publication might not be interrupted by my imprisonment or by any event that might happen to me, it was highly proper that I should have a fellow-citizen of America with me during the examination of my papers, as I had letters of correspondence in my possession of the President of Congress, General Washington; the Minister of Foreign Affairs to Congress, Mr. Jefferson; and the late Benjamin Franklin; and it might be necessary for me to make a procès-verbal to send to Congress.

It happened that Joel Barlow had received only one proof sheet of the work, which he had compared with the copy and sent it back to the printing office.

We then went in company with Joel Barlow to my lodging; and the guard, or commissaires, took with them the interpreter to the Committee of Surety-General. It was satisfactory to me that they went through the examination of my papers with the strictness they did; and it is but justice that I say they did it not only with civility, but with tokens of respect to my character.

I showed them the remainder of the manuscript of the foregoing work. The interpreter examined it and returned it to me saying, "*It is an interesting work; it will do much good.*" I also showed him another manuscript, which I had intended for the Committee of Public Safety. It is entitled, "Observations on the Commerce between the United States of America and France,"

After the examination of my papers was finished, the guard conducted me to the prison of the Luxembourg where they left me as they would a man whose undeserved fate they regretted. I offered to write under the procès-verbal they had made that they had executed their orders with civility, but they declined it.

## PART SECOND

### PREFACE TO PART II

I have mentioned in the former part of *The Age of Reason* that it had long been my intention to publish my thoughts upon religion, but that I had originally reserved it to a later period in life, intending it to be the last work I should undertake. The circumstances, however, which existed in France in the latter end of the year 1793 determined to delay it no longer. The just and humane principles of the Revolution, which philosophy had first diffused, had been departed from. The idea, always dangerous to society, as it is derogatory to the Almighty, that priests could forgive sins, though it seemed to exist no longer, had blunted the feelings of humanity and callously prepared men for the commission of all manner of crimes. The intolerant spirit of church persecution had transferred itself into politics; the tribunals, styled revolutionary, supplied the place of an inquisition; and the guillotine of the stake. I saw many of my most intimate friends destroyed; others daily carried to prison; and I had reason to believe, and had also intimations given me, that the same danger was approaching myself.

Under these disadvantages, I began the former part of *The Age of Reason*; I had, besides, neither Bible nor Testament to refer to, though I was writing against both; nor could I procure any; notwithstanding which I have produced a work that no Bible believer, though writing at his ease and with a library of church books about him, can refute. Towards the latter end of December of that year a motion was made and carried

to exclude foreigners from the Convention. There were but two in it, Anacharsis Cloots and myself; and I saw I was particularly pointed at by Bourdon de l'Oise in his speech on that motion.

Conceiving, after this, that I had but a few days of liberty, I sat down and brought the work to a close as speedily as possible; and I had not finished it more than six hours, in the state it has since appeared; before a guard came there about three in the morning, with an order signed by the two committees of public safety and surety general for putting me in arrestation as a foreigner, and conveyed me to the prison of the Luxembourg. I contrived in my way there to call on Joel Barlow, and I put the manuscript of the work into his hands, as more safe than in my possession in prison; and not knowing what might be the fate in France either of the writer or the work, I addressed it to the protection of the citizens of the United States.

It is with justice that I say that the guard who executed this order, and the interpreter to the Committee of General Surety who accompanied them to examine my papers, treated me not only with civility, but with respect. The keeper of the Luxembourg, Benoit, a man of good heart, showed to me every friendship in his power, as did also all his family, while he continued in that station. He was removed from it, put into arrestation, and carried before the tribunal upon a malignant accusation, but acquitted.

After I had been in the Luxembourg about three weeks, the Americans then in Paris went in a body to the Convention to reclaim me as their countryman and friend; but were answered by the President, Vadier, who was also President of the Committee of Surety-General and had signed the order for my arrestation, that I was born in England. I heard not more, after this, from any person out of the walls of the prison till the fall of Robespierre on the 9th of Thermidor, July 27, 1794.

About two months before this event I was seized with a fever that in its progress had every symptom of becoming mortal, and from the effects of which I am not recovered. It was

then I remembered with renewed satisfaction, and congratulated myself most sincerely on having written the former part of *The Age of Reason*. I had then but little expectation of surviving, and those about me had less. I know, therefore, by experience, the conscientious trial of my own principles.

I was then with three chamber comrades—Joseph Vanheule of Bruges, Charles Bastini and Michael Robyns of Louvain. The unceasing and anxious attention of these three friends to me, by night and by day, I remember with gratitude and mention with pleasure. It happened that a physician (Dr. Graham) and a surgeon (Mr. Bond), part of the suite of General O'Hara, were then in the Luxembourg. I ask not myself whether it be convenient to them, as men under the English government, that I express to them my thanks; but I should reproach myself if I did not; and also to the physician of the Luxembourg, Dr. Markoski.

I have some reason to believe, because I cannot discover any other cause, that this illness preserved me in existence. Among the papers of Robespierre that were examined and reported upon to the Convention by a Committee of Deputies, is a note in the handwriting of Robespierre, in the following words:

“Demander que Thomas	“Demand that Thomas
Paine soit decreté d'accusa-	Paine be decreed of accusa-
tion, pour l'intérêt de l'Amé-	tion for the interest of Amer-
rique autant que de la France.”	ica, as well as of France.”

From what cause it was that the intention was not put in execution I know not and cannot inform myself; and therefore I ascribe it to impossibility on account of that illness.

The Convention, to repair as much as lay in their power the injustice I had sustained, invited me publicly and unanimously to return to the Convention, and which I accepted to show I could bear an injury without permitting it to injure my principles or my disposition. It is not because right principles have been violated that they are to be abandoned.

I have seen, since I have been at liberty, several publications

written—some in America and some in England—as answers to the former part of *The Age of Reason*. If the authors of these can amuse themselves by so doing, I shall not interrupt them. They may write against the work and against me as much as they please; they do me more service than they intend, and I can have no objection that they write on. They will find, however, by this second part, without its being written as an answer to them, that they must return to their work and spin their cobweb over again. The first is brushed away by accident.

They will now find that I have furnished myself with a Bible and Testament; and I can say also that I have found them to be much worse books than I had conceived. If I have erred in anything in the former part of *The Age of Reason*, it has been by speaking better of some parts of those books than they deserved.

I observed that all my opponents resort more or less to what they call Scripture evidence and Bible authority to help them out. They are so little masters of the subject as to confound a dispute about authenticity with a dispute about doctrines; I will, however, put them right, that if they should be disposed to write any more, they may know how to begin.

October, 1795

## THE OLD TESTAMENT

### [THE QUESTION OF AUTHENTICITY]

It has often been said that anything may be proved from the Bible, but before anything can be admitted as proved by the Bible, the Bible itself must be proved to be true; for if the Bible be not true, or the truth of it be doubtful, it ceases to have authority and cannot be admitted as proof of anything.

It has been the practice of all Christian commentators on the Bible, and of all Christian priests and preachers, to impose the Bible on the world as a mass of truth and as the word of God;

they have disputed and wrangled, and have anathematized each other about the supposable meaning of particular parts and passages therein; one has said and insisted that such a passage meant such a thing; another that it meant directly the contrary; and a third, that it meant neither one nor the other, but something different from both; and this they have called the *understanding* the Bible.

It has happened that all the answers that I have seen to the former part of *The Age of Reason* have been written by priests; and these pious men, like their predecessors, contend and wrangle and pretend to *understand* the Bible; each understands it differently, but each understands it best; and they have agreed in nothing but in telling their readers that Thomas Paine understands it not.

Now instead of wasting their time and heating themselves in fractious disputations about doctrinal points drawn from the Bible, these men *ought to know* and, if they do not, it is civility to inform them, that the first thing to be *understood* is whether there is sufficient authority for believing the Bible to be the word of God, or whether there is not.

There are matters in that book, said to be done by the *express command of God*, that are as shocking to humanity and to every idea we have of moral justice as anything done by Robespierre, by Carrier, by Joseph le Bon, in France, by the English government in the East Indies, or by any other assassin in modern times. When we read in the books ascribed to Moses, Joshua, etc., that they (the Israelites) came by stealth upon whole nations of people who, as the history itself shows, had given them no offense; *that they put all those nations to the sword; that they spared neither age nor infancy; that they utterly destroyed men, women, and children; that they left not a soul to breathe*; expressions that are repeated over and over again in those books, and that too with exulting ferocity; are we sure these things are facts? Are we sure that the Creator of man commissioned those things to be done; are we sure that the books that tell us so were written by his authority?

It is not the antiquity of a tale that is any evidence of its

truth; on the contrary, it is a symptom of its being fabulous; for the more ancient any history pretends to be, the more it has the resemblance of a fable. The origin of every nation is buried in fabulous tradition, and that of the Jews is as much to be suspected as any other.

To charge the commission of acts upon the Almighty, which in their own nature and by every rule of moral justice are crimes, as all assassination is and more especially the assassination of infants, is matter of serious concern. The Bible tells us that those assassinations were done by the *express command of God*. To believe, therefore, the Bible to be true, we must *unbelieve* all our belief in the moral justice of God; for wherein could crying or smiling infants offend? And to read the Bible without horror, we must undo everything that is tender, sympathizing, and benevolent in the heart of man. Speaking for myself, if I had no other evidence that the Bible was fabulous than the sacrifice I must make to believe it to be true, that alone would be sufficient to determine my choice.

But in addition to all the moral evidence against the Bible, I will in the progress of this work produce such other evidence as even a priest cannot deny; and show from that evidence that the Bible is not entitled to credit as being the word of God.

But before I proceed to this examination I will show wherein the Bible differs from all other ancient writings with respect to the nature of the evidence necessary to establish its authenticity; and this is the more proper to be done because the advocates of the Bible, in their answers to the former part of *The Age of Reason*, undertake to say—and they put some stress thereon—that the authenticity of the Bible is as well established as that of any other ancient book; as if our belief of the one could become any rule for our belief of the other.

I know, however, but of one ancient book that authoritatively challenges universal consent and belief, and that is *Euclid's Elements of Geometry*;<sup>1</sup> and the reason is because it is

<sup>1</sup>Euclid, according to chronological history, lived three hundred years before Christ, and about one hundred years before Archimedes; he was of the city of Alexandria in Egypt. [Paine's note.]

a book of self-evident demonstration, entirely independent of its author and of everything relating to time, place, and circumstance. The matters contained in that book would have the same authority they now have had they been written by any other person or had the work been anonymous, or had the author never been known; for the identical certainty of who was the author makes no part of our belief of the matters contained in the book.

But it is quite otherwise with respect to the books ascribed to Moses, to Joshua, to Samuel, etc.; those are books of *testimony*, and they testify of things naturally incredible; and, therefore, the whole of our belief as to the authenticity of those books rests, in the first place, upon the *certainty* that they were written by Moses, Joshua, and Samuel; secondly, upon the credit we give to their testimony. We may believe the first—that is, may believe the certainty of the authorship, and yet not the testimony—in the same manner that we may believe that a certain person gave evidence upon a case, and yet not believe the evidence that he gave. But if it should be found that the books ascribed to Moses, Joshua, and Samuel were not written by Moses, Joshua, and Samuel, every part of the authority and authenticity of those books is gone at once; for there can be no such thing as forged or invented testimony; neither can there be anonymous testimony, more especially as to things naturally incredible; such as that of talking with God face to face, or that of the sun and moon standing still at the command of a man.

The greatest part of the other ancient books are works of genius; of which kind are those ascribed to Homer, to Plato, to Aristotle, to Demosthenes, to Cicero, etc. Here again the author is not an essential in the credit we give to any of those works; for, as works of genius, they would have the same merit they have now were they anonymous. Nobody believes the Trojan story, as related by Homer, to be true; for it is the poet only that is admired; and the merit of the poet will remain, though the story be fabulous. But if we disbelieve the matters related by the Bible authors (Moses, for instance) as we disbelieve the things related by Homer, there remains nothing of

books themselves; and I will confine myself to this evidence only. Were I to refer for proofs to any of the ancient authors whom the advocates of the Bible call profane authors, they would controvert that authority, as I controvert theirs; I will therefore meet them on their own ground and oppose them with their own weapon—the Bible.

In the first place, there is no affirmative evidence that Moses is the author of those books; and that he is the author is altogether an unfounded opinion, got abroad nobody knows how. The style and manner in which those books are written give no room to believe or even to suppose they were written by Moses; for it is altogether the style and manner of another person speaking of Moses. In Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers (for everything in Genesis is prior to the times of Moses and not the least allusion is made to him therein)—the whole, I say, of these books is in the third person; it is always, *the Lord said unto Moses*, or *Moses said unto the Lord*, or *Moses said unto the people*, or *the people said unto Moses*; and this is the style and manner that historians use in speaking of the persons whose lives and actions they are writing. It may be said that a man may speak of himself in the third person; and, therefore, it may be supposed that Moses did; but supposition proves nothing; and if the advocates for the belief that Moses wrote those books himself have nothing better to advance than supposition, they may as well be silent.

But granting the grammatical right that Moses might speak of himself in the third person because any man might speak of himself in that manner, it cannot be admitted as a fact in those books, that it is Moses who speaks, without rendering Moses truly ridiculous and absurd; for example, Numbers xii, 3: "*Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.*" If Moses said this of himself, instead of being the meekest of men he was one of the most vain and arrogant coxcombs; and the advocates for those books may now take which side they please, for both sides are against them; if Moses was not the author, the books are without authority; and if he was the author, the books are without credit,

because to boast of meekness is the reverse of *meekness* and is a *lie in sentiment*.

[COMMENT ON SPECIFIC BOOKS]

The book of Job differs in character from all the books we have hitherto passed over. Treachery and murder make no part of this book; it is the meditations of a mind strongly impressed with the vicissitudes of human life, and by turns sinking under and struggling against the pressure. It is a highly wrought composition, between willing submission and involuntary discontent, and shows man, as he sometimes is, more disposed to be resigned than he is capable of being. Patience has but a small share in the character of the person of whom the book treats; on the contrary, his grief is often impetuous, but he still endeavors to keep a guard upon it, and seems determined in the midst of accumulating ills to impose upon himself the hard duty of contentment.

I have spoken in a respectful manner of the book of Job in the former part of the *Age of Reason*, but without knowing at that time what I have learned since, which is that from all the evidence that can be collected the book of Job does not belong to the Bible.

I have seen the opinion of two Hebrew commentators, Abenezra and Spinoza, upon this subject. They both say that the book of Job carries no internal evidence of being a Hebrew book; that the genius of the composition and the drama of the piece are not Hebrew; that it has been translated from another language into Hebrew, and that the author of the book was a Gentile; that the character represented under the name of Satan (which is the first and only time this name is mentioned in the Bible) does not correspond to any Hebrew idea, and that the two convocations which the Deity is supposed to have made of those whom the poem calls sons of God, and the familiarity which this supposed Satan is stated to have with the Deity, are in the same case.

It may also be observed that the book shows itself to be the

production of a mind cultivated in science, which the Jews, so far from being famous for, were very ignorant of. The allusions to objects of natural philosophy are frequent and strong, and are of a different cast to anything in the books known to be Hebrew. The astronomical names, Pleiades, Orion, and Arcturus, are Greek and not Hebrew names, and it does not appear from anything that is to be found in the Bible that the Jews knew anything of astronomy or that they studied it; they had no translation of those names into their own language, but adopted the names as they found them in the poem.

That the Jews did translate the literary productions of the Gentile nations into the Hebrew language, and mix them with their own, is not a matter of doubt; the thirty-first chapter of Proverbs is an evidence of this; it is there said, "*The words of King Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him.*" This verse stands as a preface to the Proverbs that follow, and which are not the proverbs of Solomon, but of Lemuel; and this Lemuel was not one of the kings of Israel, nor of Judah, but of some other country, and consequently a Gentile. The Jews, however, have adopted his proverbs, and as they cannot give any account who the author of the book of Job was, nor how they came by the book, and as it differs in character from the Hebrew writings, and stands totally unconnected with every other book and chapter in the Bible, before it and after it, it has all the circumstantial evidence of being originally a book of the Gentiles.

The Bible-makers and those regulators of time, the chronologists, appear to have been at a loss where to place and how to dispose of the book of Job; for it contains no one historical circumstance, nor allusion to any, that might determine its place in the Bible. But it would not have answered the purpose of these men to have informed the world of their ignorance, and therefore they have affixed it to the era of 1520 years before Christ, which is during the time the Israelites were in Egypt, and for which they have just as much authority and no more than I should have for saying it was a thousand years before that period. The probability, however, is that it is older than

any book in the Bible; and it is the only one that can be read without indignation or disgust. . . .

I pass on to the book of *Psalms*, of which it is not necessary to make much observation. Some of them are moral, and others are very revengeful; and the greater part relates to certain local circumstances of the Jewish nation at the time they were written, with which we have nothing to do. It is, however, an error or an imposition to call them the Psalms of David. They are a collection, as songbooks are nowadays, from different song writers, who lived at different times. The 137th Psalm could not have been written till more than 400 years after the time of David, because it was written in commemoration of an event, the captivity of the Jews in Babylon, which did not happen till that distance of time. "*By the rivers of Babylon, we sat down; yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows, in the midst thereof; for there they that carried us away captive required of us a song, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion.*" As a man would say to an American, or to a Frenchman, or to an Englishman, "Sing us one of your American songs, or of your French songs, or of your English songs." This remark, with respect to the time this Psalm was written, is of no other use than to show (among others already mentioned) the general imposition the world has been under in respect to the authors of the Bible. No regard has been paid to time, place, and circumstance, and the names of persons have been affixed to the several books, which it was as impossible they should write as that a man should walk in procession at his own funeral.

*The Book of Proverbs.* These, like the Psalms, are a collection, and that from authors belonging to other nations than those of the Jewish nation, as I have shown in the observations upon the book of Job; besides which some of the proverbs ascribed to Solomon did not appear till two hundred and fifty years after the death of Solomon; for it is said in the 1st verse of the 25th chapter, "*These are also proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah, king of Judah, copied out.*" It was two hundred and fifty years from the time of Solomon to the time of

Hezekiah. When a man is famous and his name is abroad, he is made the putative father of things he never said or did, and this, most probably, has been the case with Solomon. It appears to have been the fashion of that day to make proverbs, as it is now to make jestbooks and father them upon those who never saw them.

The book of *Ecclesiastes*, or the *Preacher*, is also ascribed to Solomon, and that with much reason, if not with truth. It is written as the solitary reflections of a worn-out debauchee, such as Solomon was, who, looking back on scenes he can no longer enjoy, cries out, "*All is vanity!*" A great deal of the metaphor and of the sentiment is obscure, most probably by translation; but enough is left to show they were strongly pointed in the original.<sup>1</sup> From what is transmitted to us of the character of Solomon, he was witty, ostentatious, dissolute, and at last melancholy. He lived fast, and died, tired of the world, at the age of fifty-eight years.

Seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines are worse than none, and however, it may carry with it the appearance of heightened enjoyment, it defeats all the felicity of affection by leaving it no point to fix upon. Divided love is never happy. This was the case with Solomon, and if he could not, with all his pretensions to wisdom, discover it beforehand, he merited, unpitied, the mortification he afterward endured. In this point of view, his preaching is unnecessary, because, to know the consequences, it is only necessary to know the cause. Seven hundred wives, and three hundred concubines would have stood in place of the whole book. It was needless, after this, to say that all was vanity and vexation of spirit; for it is impossible to derive happiness from the company of those whom we deprive of happiness.

To be happy in old age, it is necessary that we accustom ourselves to objects that can accompany the mind all the way through life, and that we take the rest as good in their day. The

<sup>1</sup>*Those that look out of the window shall be darkened*, is an obscure figure in translation for loss of sight. [Paine's note.]

mere man of pleasure is miserable in old age, and the mere drudge in business is but little better; whereas, natural philosophy, mathematical and mechanical science are a continual source of tranquil pleasure, and in spite of the gloomy dogmas of priests and of superstition, the study of these things is the true theology; it teaches man to know and to admire the Creator, for the principles of science are in the creation, and are unchangeable and of divine origin.

Those who knew Benjamin Franklin will recollect that his mind was ever young, his temper ever serene; science, that never grows gray, was always his mistress. He was never without an object, for when we cease to have an object, we become like an invalid in a hospital waiting for death. . . .

In the former part of *The Age of Reason* I have said that the word prophet was the Bible word for poet, and that the flights and metaphors of Jewish poets have been foolishly erected into what are now called prophecies. I am sufficiently justified in this opinion, not only because the books called the prophecies are written in poetical language, but because there is no word in the Bible, except it be the word prophet, that describes what we mean by a poet. I have also said that the word signifies a performer upon musical instruments, of which I have given some instances, such as that of a company of prophets prophesying with psalteries, with tabrets, with pipes, with harps, etc., and that Saul prophesied with them (I Sam., chap. x, ver. 5). It appears from this passage, and from other parts in the book of Samuel, that the word prophet was confined to signify poetry and music; for the person who was supposed to have a visionary insight into concealed things was not a prophet but a *seer*<sup>1</sup> (I Sam., chap. ix, ver. 9); and it was not till after the word *seer* went out of use (which most probably was when Saul banished those he called wizards) that the profession of the

<sup>1</sup>I know not what is the Hebrew word that corresponds to the word *seer* in English; but I observe it is translated into French by *la voyant*, from the verb *voir*, to *see*; and which means the person who *sees*, or the *seer*. [Paine's note.]

seer, or the art of seeing, became incorporated into the word prophet.

According to the *modern* meaning of the word prophet and prophesying, it signifies foretelling events to a great distance of time, and it became necessary to the inventors of the Gospel to give it this latitude of meaning in order to apply or to stretch what they call the prophecies of the Old Testament to the times of the New; but according to the Old Testament the prophesying of the seer, and afterward of the prophet, so far as the meaning of the word seer incorporated into that of prophet, had reference only to things of the time then passing or very closely connected with it, such as the event of a battle they were going to engage in, or of a journey, or of any enterprise they were going to undertake, or of any circumstance then pending, or of any difficulty they were then in; all of which had immediate reference to themselves (as in the case already mentioned of Ahaz and Isaiah with respect to the expression, "*Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son*") and not to any distant future time. It was that kind of prophesying that corresponds to what we call fortune-telling, such as casting nativities, predicting riches, fortunate or unfortunate marriages, conjuring for lost goods, etc.; and it is the fraud of the Christian Church, not that of the Jews, and the ignorance and the superstition of modern, not that of ancient times, that elevated those poetical, musical, conjuring, dreaming, strolling gentry into the rank they have since had.

But, besides this general character of all the prophets, they had also a particular character. They were in parties, and they prophesied for or against, according to the party they were with, as the poetical and political writers of the present day write in defense of the party they associate with against the other.

After the Jews were divided into two nations, that of Judah and that of Israel, each party had its prophets, who abused and accused each other of being false prophets, lying prophets, impostors, etc.

The prophets of the party of Judah prophesied against the

prophets of the party of Israel; and those of the party of Israel against those of Judah. This party prophesying showed itself immediately on the separation under the first two rival kings, Rehoboam and Jeroboam. The prophet that cursed or prophesied against the altar that Jeroboam had built in Bethel was of the party of Judah, where Rehoboam was king; and he was way-laid on his return home by a prophet of the party of Israel, who said unto him (I Kings, chap. xiii), "*Art thou the man of God that came from Judah? and he said, I am.*" Then the prophet of the party of Israel said to him, "*I am a prophet also, as thou art (signifying of Judah), and an angel spake unto me by the word of the Lord, saying, Bring him back with thee into thine house, that he may eat bread and drink water: but* (says the 18th verse) *he lied unto him.*" This event, however, according to the story, is that the prophet of Judah never got back to Judah, for he was found dead on the road by the contrivance of the prophet of Israel, who, no doubt, was called a true prophet by his own party, and the prophet of Judah a lying prophet.

In the third chapter of the second of Kings, a story is related of prophesying or conjuring that shows, in several particulars, the character of a prophet. Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, and Jehoram, king of Israel, had for a while ceased their party animosity and entered into an alliance; and these two, together with the king of Edom, engaged in a war against the king of Moab. After uniting and marching their armies, the story says they were in great distress for water; upon which Jehoshaphat said, "*Is there not here a prophet of the Lord, that we may inquire of the Lord by him? and one of the servants of the king of Israel said, Here is Elisha.*" [Elisha was one of the party of Judah.] "*And Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, said, The word of the Lord is with him.*" The story then says that these three kings went down to Elisha; and when Elisha (who, as I have said, was a Judahmite prophet) saw the king of Israel, he said unto him, "*What have I to do with thee? get thee to the prophets of thy father, and to the prophets of thy mother. And the king of Israel said unto him, Nay, for the Lord hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hand of Moab.*" [Meaning because of the

distress they were in for water.] Upon which Elisha said, "*As the Lord of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, surely, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, I would not look towards thee, nor see thee.*" Here is all the venom and vulgarity of a party prophet. We have now to see the performance, or manner of prophesying.

Ver. 15. "*Bring me (said Elisha) a minstrel: And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the Lord came upon him.*" Here is the farce of the conjurer. Now for the prophecy: "*And Elisha said [singing most probably to the tune he was playing], Thus saith the Lord, make this valley full of ditches*"; which was just telling them what every countryman could have told them, without either fiddle or farce, that the way to get water was to dig for it.

But as every conjurer is not famous alike for the same thing, so neither were those prophets; for though all of them, at least those I have spoken of, were famous for lying, some of them excelled in cursing. Elisha, whom I have just mentioned, was a chief in this branch of prophesying; it was he that cursed the forty-two children in the name of the Lord, whom the two she-bears came and devoured. We are to suppose that those children were of the party of Israel; but as those who will curse will lie, there is just as much credit to be given to this story of Elisha's two she-bears as there is to that of the Dragon of Wantley, of whom it is said:

"Poor children three devoured he,  
That could not with him grapple;  
And at one sup he ate them up,  
As a man would eat an apple."

There was another description of men called prophets, that amused themselves with dreams and visions; but whether by night or by day we know not. These, if they were not quite harmless, were but little mischievous. Of this class are:

Ezekiel and Daniel; and the first question upon those books, as upon all the others, is, are they genuine? that is, were they written by Ezekiel and Daniel?

Of this there is no proof, but so far as my own opinion goes, I am more inclined to believe they were, than that they were not. My reasons for this opinion are as follows: First, Because those books do not contain internal evidence to prove they were not written by Ezekiel and Daniel, as the books ascribed to Moses, Joshua, Samuel, etc., prove they were not written by Moses, Joshua, Samuel, etc.

Secondly, Because they were not written till after the Babylonian captivity began, and there is good reason to believe that not any book in the Bible was written before that period; at least it is proveable, from the books themselves, as I have already shown, that they were not written till after the commencement of the Jewish monarchy.

Thirdly, Because the manner in which the books ascribed to Ezekiel and Daniel are written agrees with the condition these men were in at the time of writing them.

Had the numerous commentators and priests, who have foolishly employed or wasted their time in pretending to expound and unriddle those books, been carried into captivity, as Ezekiel and Daniel were, it would have greatly improved their intellects in comprehending the reason for this mode of writing, and have saved them the trouble of racking their invention, as they have done, to no purpose; for they would have found that themselves would be obliged to write whatever they had to write respecting their own affairs or those of their friends or of their country, in a concealed manner, as those men have done.

These two books differ from all the rest, for it is only these that are filled with accounts of dreams and visions; and this difference arose from the situation the writers were in as prisoners of war, or prisoners of state, in a foreign country, which obliged them to convey even the most trifling information to each other, and all their political projects or opinions, in obscure and metaphorical terms. They pretended to have dreamed dreams and seen visions, because it was unsafe for them to speak facts or plain language. We ought, however, to suppose that the persons to whom they wrote understood what they

meant, and that it was not intended anybody else should. But these busy commentators and priests have been puzzling their wits to find out what it was not intended they should know, and with which they have nothing to do.

Ezekiel and Daniel were carried prisoners to Babylon under the first captivity in the time of Jehoiakim, nine years before the second captivity in the time of Zedekiah.

The Jews were then still numerous, and had considerable force at Jerusalem; and as it is natural to suppose that men in the situation of Ezekiel and Daniel would be meditating the recovery of their country and their own deliverance, it is reasonable to suppose that the accounts of dreams and visions with which those books are filled, are no other than a disguised mode of correspondence to facilitate those objects—it served them as a cipher or secret alphabet. If they are not this, they are tales, reveries, and nonsense; or, at least, a fanciful way of wearing off the wearisomeness of captivity; but the presumption is they were the former.

Ezekiel begins his books by speaking of a vision of *cherubims* and of a *wheel within a wheel*, which he says he saw by the river Chebar in the land of his captivity. Is it not reasonable to suppose that by the cherubims he meant the temple of Jerusalem, where they had figures of cherubims? and by a wheel within a wheel (which, as a figure, has always been understood to signify political contrivance) the project or means of recovering Jerusalem? In the latter part of this book, he supposes himself transported to Jerusalem and into the temple; and he refers back to the vision on the river Chebar, and says (chapter xliii, verse 3), that this last vision was like the vision on the river Chebar; which indicates that those pretended dreams and visions had for their object the recovery of Jerusalem, and nothing further.

As to the romantic interpretations and applications, wild as the dreams and visions they undertake to explain, which commentators and priests have made of those books, that of converting them into things which they call prophecies, and making them bend to times and circumstances as far remote even as the

present day, it shows the fraud or the extreme folly to which credulity or priestcraft can go.

Scarcely anything can be more absurd than to suppose that men situated as Ezekiel and Daniel were, whose country was overrun and in the possession of the enemy, all their friends and relations in captivity abroad, or in slavery at home, or massacred, or in continual danger of it; scarcely anything, I say, can be more absurd than to suppose that such men should find nothing to do but that of employing their time and their thoughts about what was to happen to other nations a thousand or two thousand years after they were dead; at the same time nothing is more natural than that they should meditate the recovery of Jerusalem, and their own deliverance; and that this was the sole object of all the obscure and apparently frantic writings contained in those books.

In this sense, the mode of writing used in those two books, being forced by necessity and not adopted by choice, is not irrational; but if we are to use the books as prophecies, they are false. In the 29th chapter of Ezekiel, speaking of Egypt, it is said (ver. 11), "*No foot of man shall pass through it, nor foot of beast shall pass through it; neither shall it be inhabited for forty years.*" This is what never came to pass, and consequently it is false, as all the books I have already reviewed are. I here close this part of the subject.

In the former part of the *Age of Reason* I have spoken of Jonah, and the story of him and the whale. A fit story for ridicule if it was written to be believed; or of laughter if it was intended to try what credulity could swallow; for if it could swallow Jonah and the whale, it could swallow anything.

But as is already shown in the observations on the book of Job and of Proverbs, it is not always certain which of the books in the Bible are originally Hebrew, or only translations from the books of the Gentiles into Hebrew; and as the book of Jonah, so far from treating of the affairs of the Jews, says nothing upon that subject, but treats altogether of the Gentiles, it is more probable that it is a book of the Gentiles than of the Jews, and

that it has been written as a fable to expose the nonsense and satirize the vicious and malignant character of a Bible prophet, or a predicting priest.

Jonah is represented, first, as a disobedient prophet, running away from his mission and taking shelter aboard a vessel of the Gentiles, bound from Joppa to Tarshish; as if he ignorantly supposed, by some paltry contrivance, he could hide himself where God could not find him. The vessel is overtaken by a storm at sea, and the mariners, all of whom are Gentiles, believing it to be a judgment on account of some one on board who had committed a crime, agreed to cast lots to discover the offender, and the lot fell upon Jonah. But, before this, they had cast all their wares and merchandise overboard to lighten the vessel, while Jonah, like a stupid fellow, was fast asleep in the hold.

After the lot had designated Jonah to be the offender, they questioned him to know who and what he was, and he told them *he was a Hebrew*; and the story implies that he confessed himself to be guilty. But these Gentiles, instead of sacrificing him at once without pity or mercy, as a company of Bible prophets or priests would have done by a Gentile in the same case, and as it is related Samuel had done by Agag and Moses by the women and children, they endeavored to save him, though at the risk of their own lives, for the account says, "*Nevertheless* (that is, though Jonah was a Jew and a foreigner, and the cause of all their misfortunes and the loss of their cargo), *the men rowed hard to bring it (the boat) to land, but they could not for the sea wrought and was tempestuous against them.*" Still they were unwilling to put the fate of the lot into execution, and they cried (says the account) unto the Lord, saying (v. 14), "*We beseech thee, O Lord, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood; for thou, O Lord, has done as it pleased thee.*" Meaning thereby that they did not presume to judge guilty, since that he might be innocent; but that they considered the lot that had fallen to him as a decree of God, or as it *pleased God*. The address of this prayer shows that the Gentiles worshipped one *Supreme Being*, and that they were not idolaters,

as the Jews represented them to be. But the storm still continuing and the danger increasing, they put the fate of the lot into execution, and cast Jonah into the sea, where, according to the story, a great fish swallowed him up whole and alive.

We have now to consider Jonah securely housed from the storm in the fish's belly. Here we are told that he prayed; but the prayer is a made-up prayer, taken from various parts of the Psalms, without any connection or consistency, and adapted to the distress but not at all to the condition that Jonah was in. It is such a prayer as a Gentile, who might know something of the Psalms, could copy out for him. This circumstance alone, were there no other, is sufficient to indicate that the whole is a made-up story. The prayer, however, is supposed to have answered the purpose, and the story goes on (taking up at the same time the cant language of a Bible prophet), saying (chap. ii, ver. 10): "*And the Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.*"

Jonah then received a second mission to Nineveh, with which he sets out; and we have now to consider him as a preacher. The distress he is represented to have suffered, the remembrance of his own disobedience as the cause of it, and the miraculous escape he is supposed to have had, were sufficient, one would conceive, to have impressed him with sympathy and benevolence in the execution of his mission; but, instead of this, he enters the city with denunciation and malediction in his mouth, crying (chap. iii, ver. 4): "*Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.*"

We have now to consider this supposed missionary in the last act of his mission; and here it is that the malevolent spirit of a Bible-prophet, or of a predicting priest, appears in all that blackness of character that men ascribe to the being they call the devil.

Having published his predictions, he withdrew, says the story, to the east side of the city. But for what? Not to contemplate, in retirement, the mercy of his Creator to himself or to others, but to wait, with malignant impatience, the de-

struction of Nineveh. It came to pass, however, as the story relates, that the Ninevites reformed, and that God, according to the Bible phrase, repented him of the evil he had said he would do unto them, and did it not. This, saith the first verse of the last chapter, "*displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry.*" His obdurate heart would rather that all Nineveh should be destroyed and every soul, young and old, perish in its ruins, than that his prediction should not be fulfilled. To expose the character of a prophet still more, a gourd is made to grow up in the night that promised him an agreeable shelter from the heat of the sun in the place to which he had retired, and the next morning it dies.

Here the rage of the prophet becomes excessive, and he is ready to destroy himself. "*It is better, said he, for me to die than to live.*" This brings on a supposed expostulation between the Almighty and the prophet in which the former says, "*Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And Jonah said, I do well to be angry even unto death. Then, said the Lord, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for which thou hast not labored, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night; and should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand?*"

Here is both the winding up of the satire and the moral of the fable. As a satire, it strikes against the character of all the Bible prophets, and against all the indiscriminate judgments upon men, women, and children, with which this lying book, the Bible, is crowded; such as Noah's flood, the destruction of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, the extirpation of the Canaanites, even to the sucking infants, and women with child, because the same reflection, *that there are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand*, meaning young children, applies to all their cases. It satirizes also the supposed partiality of the Creator for one nation more than for another.

As a moral, it preaches against the malevolent spirit of prediction; for as certainly as a man predicts ill, he becomes in-

clined to wish it. The pride of having his judgment right hardens his heart, till at last he beholds with satisfaction or sees with disappointment the accomplishment or the failure of his predictions. This book ends with the same kind of strong and well-directed point against prophets, prophecies, and indiscriminate judgment, as the chapter that Benjamin Franklin made for the Bible, about Abraham and the stranger, ends against the intolerant spirit of religious persecution. Thus much for the book of Jonah.

## THE NEW TESTAMENT

### [THE EPISTLES OF PAUL]

The epistles ascribed to Paul, being fourteen in number, almost fill up the remaining part of the Testament. Whether those epistles were written by the person to whom they are ascribed is a matter of no great importance, since the writer, whoever he was, attempts to prove his doctrine by argument. He does not pretend to have been witness to any of the scenes told of the resurrection and the ascension, and he declares that he had not believed them.

The story of his being struck to the ground as he was journeying to Damascus has nothing in it miraculous or extraordinary; he escaped with life, and that is more than many others have done who have been struck with lightning; and that he should lose his sight for three days, and be unable to eat or drink during that time, is nothing more than is common in such conditions. His companions that were with him appear not to have suffered in the same manner, for they were well enough to lead him the remainder of the journey; neither did they pretend to have seen any vision.

The character of the person called Paul, according to the accounts given of him, has in it a great deal of violence and fanaticism; he had persecuted with as much heat as he preached afterward; the stroke he had received had changed his thinking without altering his constitution; and either as a Jew or a Christian, he was the same zealot. Such men are never good

moral evidences of any doctrine they preach. They are always in extremes, as well of actions as of belief.

The doctrine he sets out to prove by argument is the resurrection of the same body, and he advances this as an evidence of immortality. But so much will men differ in their manner of thinking, and in the conclusions they draw from the same premises, that this doctrine of the resurrection of the same body, so far from being an evidence of immortality, appears to me to furnish an evidence against it; for if I have already died in this body, and am raised again in the same body in which I have lived, it is a presumptive evidence that I shall die again. That resurrection no more secures me against the repetition of dying than an ague-fit, when passed, secures me against another. . . .

Besides, as a matter of choice, as well as of hope, I had rather have a better body and a more convenient form than the present. Every animal in the creation excels us in something. The winged insects, without mentioning doves or eagles, can pass over more space and with greater ease in a few minutes than man can in an hour. The glide of the smallest fish, in proportion to its bulk, exceeds us in motion almost beyond comparison and without weariness. Even the sluggish snail can ascend from the bottom of a dungeon where a man, by the want of that ability, would perish; and a spider can launch itself from the top as a playful amusement. The personal powers of man are so limited, and his heavy frame so little constructed to extensive enjoyment, that there is nothing to induce us to wish the opinion of Paul to be true. It is too little for the magnitude of the scene—too mean for the sublimity of the subject.

But all other arguments apart, the *consciousness of existence* is the only conceivable idea we can have of another life, and the continuance of that consciousness is immortality. The consciousness of existence, or the knowing that we exist, is not necessarily confined to the same form, nor to the same matter, even in this life.

We have not in all cases the same form, nor in any case the same matter that composed our bodies twenty or thirty years

ago; and yet we are conscious of being the same persons. Even legs and arms, which make up almost half the human frame, are not necessary to the consciousness of existence. These may be lost or taken away, and the full consciousness of existence remain; and were their place supplied by wings, or other appendages, we cannot conceive that it would alter our consciousness of existence. In short, we know not how much, or rather how little, of our composition it is, and how exquisitely fine that little is, that creates in us this consciousness of existence; and all beyond that is like the pulp of a peach, distinct and separate from the vegetative speck in the kernel.

Who can say by what exceedingly fine action of fine matter it is that a thought is produced in what we call the mind? And yet that thought when produced, as I now produce the thought I am writing, is capable of becoming immortal, and is the only production of man that has that capacity.

Statues of brass or marble will perish; and statues made in imitation of them are not the same statues, nor the same workmanship, any more than the copy of a picture is the same picture. But print and reprint a thought a thousand times over, and that with materials of any kind—carve it in wood and engrave it on stone, the thought is eternally and identically the same thought in every case. It has a capacity of unimpaired existence, unaffected by change of matter, and is essentially distinct and of a nature different from everything else that we know or can conceive. If, then, the thing produced has in itself a capacity of being immortal, it is more than a token that the power that produced it, which is the selfsame thing as a consciousness of existence, can be immortal also; and that as independently of the matter it was first connected with as the thought is of the printing or writing it first appeared in. The one idea is not more difficult to believe than the other, and we can see that one is true.

That the consciousness of the existence is not dependent on the same form or the same matter is demonstrated to our senses in the works of the creation, as far as our senses are capable of receiving that demonstration. A very numerous part of the

animal creation preaches to us, far better than Paul, the belief of a life hereafter. Their little life resembles an earth and a heaven—a present and a future state, and comprises, if it may be so expressed, immortality in miniature.

The most beautiful parts of the creation to our eye are the winged insects, and they are not so originally. They acquire that form and that inimitable brilliancy by progressive changes. The slow and creeping caterpillar-worm of today passes in a few days to a torpid figure and a state resembling death; and in the next change comes forth in all the miniature magnificence of life, a splendid butterfly. No resemblance of the former creature remains; everything is changed; all his powers are new, and life is to him another thing. We cannot conceive that the consciousness of existence is not the same in this state of the animal as before; why then must I believe that the resurrection of the same body is necessary to continue to me the consciousness of existence hereafter?

In the former part of *The Age of Reason* I have called the creation the only true and real word of God; and this instance, or this text, in the book of creation, not only shows to us that this thing may be so, but that it is so; and that the belief of a future state is a rational belief, founded upon facts visible in the creation; for it is not more difficult to believe that we shall exist hereafter in a better state and form than at present, than that a worm should become a butterfly, and quit the dunghill for the atmosphere, if we did not know it as a fact.

As to the doubtful jargon ascribed to Paul in the 15th chapter of I Corinthians, which makes part of the burial service of some Christian sectaries, it is as destitute of meaning as the tolling of a bell at a funeral; it explains nothing to the understanding—it illustrates nothing to the imagination, but leaves the reader to find any meaning if he can. "All flesh (says he) is not the same flesh. There is one flesh of men; another of beast; another of fishes; and another of birds." And what then?—nothing. A cook could have said as much. "There are also (says he) bodies celestial, and bodies terrestrial; the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another." And what

then?—nothing. And what is the difference?—nothing that he has told. “There is (says he) one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars.” And what then?—nothing; except that he says that *one star differeth from another star in glory*, instead of distance; and he might as well have told us that the moon did not shine so bright as the sun. All this is nothing better than the jargon of a conjuror, who picks up phrases he does not understand to confound the credulous people who have come to have their fortunes told. Priests and conjurors are of the same trade.

Sometimes Paul affects to be a naturalist and to prove his system of resurrection from the principles of vegetation. “*Thou fool* (says he), *that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die.*” To which one might reply in his own language, and say: “Thou fool, Paul; that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die *not*; for the grain that dies in the ground never does nor can vegetate. It is only the living grains that produce the next crop.” But the metaphor, in any point of view, is no simile. It is succession, and not resurrection. . . .

Whether the fourteen epistles ascribed to Paul were written by him or not is a matter of indifference; they are either argumentative or dogmatical; and as the argument is defective, and the dogmatical part is merely presumptive, it signifies not who wrote them. And the same may be said for the remaining parts of the Testament. It is not upon the epistles, but upon what is called the gospel, contained in the four books ascribed to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and upon the pretended prophecies that the theory of the church calling itself the Christian church is founded. The epistles are dependent upon those and must follow their fate; for if the story of Jesus Christ be fabulous, all reasoning founded upon it as a supposed truth must fall with it.

We know from history that one of the principal leaders of this church, Athanasius, lived at the time the New Testament was formed, and we know also from the absurd jargon he has left us under the name of a creed, the character of the men who formed the New Testament; and we know also from the same

history that the authenticity of the books of which it is composed was denied at the time. It was upon the vote of such as Athanasius that the Testament was decreed to be the word of God; and nothing can present to us a more strange idea than that of decreeing the word of God by vote. Those who rest their faith upon such authority put man in the place of God and have no true foundation for future happiness. Credulity, however, is not a crime; but it becomes criminal by resisting conviction. It is strangling in the womb of the conscience the efforts it makes to ascertain truth. We should never force belief upon ourselves in anything.

I here close the subject on the Old Testament and the New. The evidence I have produced to prove them forgeries is extracted from the books themselves, and acts like a two-edged sword, either way. If the evidence be denied, the authenticity of the scriptures is denied with it, for it is a scripture evidence; and if the evidence be admitted the authenticity of the books is disproved. The contradictory impossibilities contained in the Old Testament and the New, put them in the case of a man who swears *for* and *against*. Either evidence convicts him of perjury and equally destroys reputation.

Should the Bible and the Testament hereafter fall, it is not that I have done it. I have done no more than extract the evidence from the confused mass of matters with which it is mixed, and arranged that evidence in a point of light to be clearly seen and easily comprehended; and, having done this, I leave the reader to judge for himself, as I have judged for myself.

## CONCLUSION

In the former part of *The Age of Reason* I have spoken of the three frauds, *mystery*, *miracle*, and *prophecy*; and as I have seen nothing in any of the answers to that work that in the least affects what I have there said upon those subjects, I shall not encumber this Second Part with additions that are not necessary.

I have spoken also in the same work upon what is called

*revelation*, and have shown the absurd misapplication of that term to the books of the Old Testament and the New; for certainly revelation is out of the question in reciting anything of which man has been the actor or the witness. That which man has done or seen needs no revelation to tell him he has done or seen it; for he knows it already; nor to enable him to tell it or to write it. It is ignorance or imposition to apply the term revelation in such cases; yet the Bible and Testament are classed under this fraudulent description of being all *revelation*.

Revelation then, so far as the term has relation between God and man, can only be applied to something which God reveals of his *will* to man; but though the power of the Almighty to make such a communication is necessarily admitted, because to that power all things are possible, yet the thing so revealed (if anything ever was revealed, and which, by the bye, it is impossible to prove) is revelation to the person *only to whom it is made*. His account of it to another is not revelation; and whoever puts faith in that account puts it in the man from whom the account comes; and that man may have been deceived, or may have dreamed it; or he may be an impostor, and may lie. There is no possible criterion whereby to judge of the truth of what he tells; for even the morality of it would be no proof of revelation. In all such cases the proper answer should be, "*When it is revealed to me, I will believe it to be revelation; but it is not, and it cannot be incumbent upon me to believe it to be revelation before; neither is it proper that I should take the word of man as the word of God, and put man in the place of God.*"

This is the manner in which I have spoken of revelation in the former part of the *Age of Reason*, and which, whilst it reverentially admits revelation is a possible thing, because (as before said) to the Almighty all things are possible, it prevents the imposition of one man upon another, and precludes the wicked use of pretended revelation.

But though, speaking for myself, I thus admit the possibility of revelation, I totally disbelieve that the Almighty ever did communicate anything to man by any mode of speech, in any

language, or by any kind of vision or appearance, or by any means which our senses are capable of receiving, otherwise than by the universal display of himself in the works of the creation, and by that repugnance we feel in ourselves to bad actions, and disposition to good ones.

The most detestable wickedness, the most horrid cruelties, and the greatest miseries that have afflicted the human race, have had their origin in this thing called revelation or revealed religion. It has been the most dishonorable belief against the character of the divinity, the most destructive to morality and the peace and happiness of man, that ever was propagated since man began to exist. It is better, far better, that we admitted, if it were possible, a thousand devils to roam at large and to preach publicly the doctrine of devils, if there were any such, than that we permitted word of one such impostor and monster as Moses, Joshua, Samuel, and the Bible prophets, to come with the pretended word of God in his mouth, and have credit among us.

Whence arose all the horrid assassinations of whole nations of men, women, and infants, with which the Bible is filled, and the bloody persecutions, and tortures unto death, and religious wars, that since that time have laid Europe in blood and ashes; whence arose they but from this impious thing called revealed religion, and this monstrous belief that God has spoken to man? The lies of the Bible have been the cause of the one and the lies of the Testament of the other.

Some Christians pretend that Christianity was not established by the sword; but of what period of time do they speak? It is impossible that *twelve* men could *begin* with the sword; they had not the power; but no sooner were the professors of Christianity sufficiently powerful to employ the sword than they did so, and the stake and fagot too; and Mahomet could not do it sooner. By the same spirit that Peter cut off the ear of the high priest's servant (if the story be true), he would have cut off his head, and the head of his master, had he been able. Besides this, Christianity grounds itself originally upon the Bible, and the Bible was established altogether by the sword,

and that in the worst use of it, not to terrify but to extirpate. The Jews made no converts; they butchered all. The Bible is the sire of the Testament, and both are called the *word of God*. The Christians read both books; the ministers preach from both books; and this thing called Christianity is made up of both. It is then false to say that Christianity was not established by the sword.

The only sect that has not persecuted are the Quakers; and the only reason that can be given for it is that they are rather Deists than Christians. They do not believe much about Jesus Christ, and they call the scriptures a dead letter. Had they called them by a worse name, they had been nearer the truth.

It is incumbent on every man who reverences the character of the Creator, and who wishes to lessen the catalogue of artificial miseries, and remove the cause that has sown persecution thick among mankind, to expel all ideas of revealed religion as a dangerous heresy and impious fraud. What is it that we have learned from this pretended thing called revealed religion? Nothing that is useful to man, and everything that is dishonorable to his Maker. What is it that the Bible teaches us?—rapine, cruelty, and murder. What is it the Testament teaches us?—to believe that the Almighty committed debauchery with a woman engaged to be married; and the belief of this debauchery is called faith.

As to the fragments of morality that are irregularly and thinly scattered in those books, they make no part of this pretended thing called revealed religion. They are the natural dictates of conscience and the bonds by which society is held together and without which it cannot exist, and are nearly the same in all religions and in all societies. The New Testament teaches nothing new upon the subject, and where it attempts to exceed, it becomes mean and ridiculous. The doctrine of not retaliating injuries is much better expressed in Proverbs, which is a collection as well from the Gentiles as the Jews, than it is in the Testament. It is there said (Proverbs xxv, 21), "*If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to*

drink;"<sup>1</sup> but when it is said, as in the Testament, "*If a man smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also,*" it is assassinating the dignity of forbearance, and sinking man into a spaniel.

*Loving of enemies* is another dogma of feigned morality, and has besides no meaning. It is incumbent on man, as a moralist, that he does not revenge an injury; and it is equally as good in a political sense, for there is no end to retaliation; each retaliates on the other, and calls it justice; but to love in proportion to the injury, if it could be done, would be to offer a premium for crime. Besides, the word *enemies* is too vague and general to be used in a moral maxim, which ought always to be clear and defined, like a proverb. If a man be the enemy of another from mistake and prejudice, as in the case of religious opinions, and sometimes in politics, that man is different from an enemy at heart with a criminal intention; and it is incumbent upon us, and it contributes also to our own tranquillity, that we put the best construction upon a thing that it will bear. But even this erroneous motive in him makes no motive for love on the other part; and to say that we can love voluntarily, and without a motive, is morally and physically impossible.

Morality is injured by prescribing to it duties that, in the first place, are impossible to be performed, and if they could be would be productive of evil; or, as before said, be premiums

<sup>1</sup>According to what is called Christ's Sermon on the Mount, in the book of Matthew, where, among some good things, a great deal of this feigned morality is introduced, it is there expressly said that the doctrine of forbearance or of not retaliating injuries *was not any part of the doctrine of the Jews*; but as this doctrine is found in Proverbs, it must, according to that statement, have been copied from the Gentiles, from whom Christ had learned it. Those men whom Jewish and Christian idolators have abusively called heathens had much better and clearer ideas of justice and morality than are to be found in the Old Testament, so far as it is Jewish, or in the New. The answer of Solon on the question, "Which is the most perfect popular government?" has never been exceeded by any man since his time, as containing a maxim of political morality. "That," says he, "*where the least injury done to the meanest individual is considered as an insult on the whole constitution.*" Solon lived about 500 B.C. [Paine's note.]

for crime. The maxim of *doing as we would be done unto* does not include this strange doctrine of loving enemies; for no man expects to be loved himself for his crime or for his enmity.

Those who preach this doctrine of loving their enemies are in general the greatest persecutors, and they act consistently by so doing; for the doctrine is hypocritical, and it is natural that hypocrisy should act the reverse of what it preaches. For my own part I disown the doctrine and consider it as a feigned or fabulous morality; yet the man does not exist that can say I have persecuted him, or any man, or any set of men, either in the American Revolution or in the French Revolution; or that I have in any case returned evil for evil. But it is not incumbent on man to reward a bad action with a good one, or to return good for evil; and wherever it is done, it is a voluntary act, and not a duty. It is also absurd to suppose that such doctrine can make any part of a revealed religion. We imitate the moral character of the Creator by forbearing with each other, for he forbears with all; but this doctrine would imply that he loved man, not in proportion as he was good, but as he was bad.

If we consider the nature of our condition here, we must see there is no occasion for such a thing as *revealed religion*. What is it we want to know? Does not the creation, the universe we behold, preach to us the existence of an almighty power that governs and regulates the whole? And is not the evidence that this creation holds out to our senses, infinitely stronger than anything we can read in a book, that any impostor might make and call the word of God? As for morality, the knowledge of it exists in every man's conscience.

Here we are. The existence of an almighty power is sufficiently demonstrated to us, though we cannot conceive, as it is impossible we should, the nature and manner of its existence. We cannot conceive how we came here ourselves, and yet we know for a fact that we are here. We must know also that the power that called us into being can, if he please and when he pleases, call us to account for the manner in which we have lived here; and therefore, without seeking any other motive for the belief, it is rational to believe that he will, for we know be-

forehand that he can. The probability, or even possibility, of the thing is all that we ought to know; for if we knew it as a fact, we should be the more slaves of terror; our belief would have no merit, and our best actions no virtue.

Deism, then, teaches us, without the possibility of being deceived, all that is necessary or proper to be known. The creation is the Bible of the Deist. He there reads, in the handwriting of the Creator himself, the certainty of his existence and the immutability of his power, and all other Bibles and Testaments are to him forgeries. The probability that we may be called to account hereafter will, to a reflecting mind, have the influence of belief; for it is not our belief or disbelief that can make or unmake the fact. As this is the state we are in, and which it is proper we should be in, as free agents, it is the fool only, and not the philosopher, nor even the prudent man, that would live as if there were no God.

But the belief of a God is so weakened by being mixed with the strange fable of the Christian creed, and with the wild adventures related in the Bible, and the obscurity and obscene nonsense of the Testament, that the mind of man is bewildered as in a fog. Viewing all these things in a confused mass, he confounds fact with fable; and as he cannot believe all, he feels a disposition to reject all. But the belief of a God is a belief distinct from all other things, and ought not to be confounded with any. The notion of a trinity of gods has enfeebled the belief of one God. A multiplication of beliefs acts as a division of belief; and in proportion as anything is divided it is weakened.

Religion, by such means, becomes a thing of form instead of fact; of notion instead of principle; morality is banished to make room for an imaginary thing called faith, and this faith has its origin in a supposed debauchery; a man is preached instead of God; an execution is an object for gratitude; the preachers daub themselves with the blood, like a troop of assassins, and pretend to admire the brilliancy it gives them; they preach a humdrum sermon on the merits of the execution; then praise Jesus Christ for being executed, and condemn the Jews for doing it.

A man, by hearing all this nonsense lumped and preached together, confounds the God of the creation with the imagined God of the Christians, and lives as if there were none.

Of all the systems of religion that ever were invented, there is none more derogatory to the Almighty, more unedifying to man, more repugnant to reason, and more contradictory in itself, than this thing called Christianity. Too absurd for belief, too impossible to convince, and too inconsistent for practice, it renders the heart torpid or produces only atheists and fanatics. As an engine of power, it serves the purpose of despotism; and as a means of wealth, the avarice of priests; but so far as respects the good of man in general, it leads to nothing here or hereafter.

The only religion that has not been invented, and that has in it every evidence of divine originality, is pure and simple Deism. It must have been the first, and will probably be the last, that man believes. But pure and simple Deism does not answer the purpose of despotic governments. They cannot lay hold of religion as an engine, but by mixing it with human inventions, and making their own authority a part; neither does it answer the avarice of priests but by incorporating themselves and their functions with it, and becoming, like the government, a party in the system. It is this that forms the otherwise mysterious connection of church and state; the church humane, and the state tyrannic.

Were man impressed as fully and strongly as he ought to be with the belief of a God, his moral life would be regulated by the force of that belief; he would stand in awe of God and of himself, and would not do the thing that could not be concealed from either. To give this belief the full opportunity of force, it is necessary that it act alone. This is Deism.

But when, according to the Christian trinitarian scheme, one part of God is represented by a dying man, and another part, called the Holy Ghost, by a flying pigeon, it is impossible that belief can attach itself to such wild conceits.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The book called the book of Matthew says (iii, 16) that *the Holy Ghost descended in the shape of a dove*. It might as well have said a

It has been the scheme of the Christian church, and of all the other invented systems of religion, to hold man in ignorance of the Creator, as it is of government to hold him in ignorance of his rights. The systems of the one are as false as those of the other, and are calculated for mutual support. The study of theology as it stands for Christian churches is the study of nothing; it is founded on nothing; it rests on no principles; it proceeds by no authorities; it has no data; it can demonstrate nothing; and admits of no conclusion. Not any thing can be studied as a science without our being in possession of the principles upon which it is founded; and as this is not the case with Christian theology, it is therefore the study of nothing.<sup>1</sup>

Instead, then, of studying theology, as is now done, out of the Bible and Testament, the meanings of which books are always controverted and the authenticity of which is disproved, it is necessary that we refer to the Bible of the creation. The

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goose; the creatures are equally harmless, and the one is as much a nonsensical lie as the other. Acts ii, 2, 3, says that it descended in a mighty *rushing wind*, in the shape of *cloven tongues*; perhaps it was cloven feet. Such absurd stuff is only fit for tales of witches and wizards. [Paine's note.]

<sup>1</sup>The Bible-makers have undertaken to give us, in the first chapter of Genesis, an account of the creation; and in doing this they have demonstrated nothing but their ignorance. They make there to have been three days and three nights, evenings, and mornings, before there was any sun; when it is the presence or absence of the sun that is the cause of day and night—and what is called his rising and setting, that of morning and evening. Besides it is a puerile and pitiful idea to suppose the Almighty to say, "Let there be light." It is the imperative manner of speaking that a conjuror uses when he says to his cups and balls, "Presto! begone," and most probably has been taken from it, as Moses and his rod are a conjuror and his wand. Longinus calls this expression the sublime; and by the same rule the conjuror is sublime too; for the manner of speaking is expressively and grammatically the same. When authors and critics talk of the sublime, they see not how nearly it borders on the ridiculous. The sublime of the critics, like some parts of Edmund Burke's Sublime and Beautiful, is like a windmill just visible in a fog, which imagination might distort into a flying mountain, or an archangel, or a flock of wild geese. [Paine's note.]

principles we discover there are eternal and of divine origin; they are the foundation of all the science that exists in the world, and must be the foundation of theology.

We can know God only through his works. We cannot have a conception of any one attribute but by following some principle that leads to it. We have only a confused idea of his powers if we have not the means of comprehending something of its immensity. We can have no idea of his wisdom but by knowing the order and manner in which it acts. The principles of science lead to this knowledge; for the Creator of man is the Creator of science; and it is through that medium that man can see God, as it were, face to face.

Could a man be placed in a situation and endowed with the power of vision to behold at one view, and to contemplate deliberately, the structure of the universe; to mark the movements of the several planets, the cause of their varying appearances, the unerring order in which they revolve, even to the remotest comet; their connection and dependence on each other; and to know the system of laws established by the Creator that governs and regulates the whole; he would then conceive, far beyond what any church theology can teach him, the power, the wisdom, the vastness, the munificence of the Creator. He would then see that all the knowledge man has of science, and that all the mechanical arts by which he renders his situation comfortable here, are derived from that source; his mind, exalted by the scene and convinced by the fact, would increase in gratitude as it increased in knowledge; his religion or his worship would become united with his improvement as a man; any employment he followed that had connection with the principles of the creation, as everything of agriculture, of science, and of the mechanical arts has, would teach him more of God and of the gratitude he owes to him than any theological Christian sermon he now hears. Great objects inspire great thoughts; great munificence excites great gratitude; but the groveling tales and doctrines of the Bible and the Testament are fit only to excite contempt.

Though man cannot arrive, at least in this life, at the actual

scene I have described, he can demonstrate it because he has a knowledge of the principles upon which the creation is constructed. We know that the greatest works can be represented in model, and that the universe can be represented by the same means. The same principles by which we measure an inch or an acre of ground will measure to millions in extent. A circle of an inch diameter has the same geometrical properties as a circle that would circumscribe the universe. The same properties of a triangle that will demonstrate upon paper the course of a ship will do it on the ocean, and when applied to what are called the heavenly bodies, will ascertain to a minute the time of an eclipse, though those bodies are millions of miles distant from us. This knowledge is of divine origin, and it is from the Bible of the creation that man has learned it, and not from the stupid Bible of the church that teacheth man nothing.

All the knowledge man has of science and of machinery, by the aid of which his existence is rendered comfortable upon earth, and without which he would be scarcely distinguishable in appearance and condition from a common animal, comes from the great machine and structure of the universe. The constant and unwearied observations of our ancestors upon the movements and revolutions of the heavenly bodies, in what are supposed to have been the early ages of the world, have brought this knowledge upon earth. It is not Moses and the prophets, nor Jesus Christ, nor his apostles, that have done it. The Almighty is the great mechanic of the creation; the first philosopher and original teacher of all science. Let us then learn to reverence our master, and not forget the labor of our ancestors.

Had we at this day no knowledge of machinery, and were it possible that man could have a view, as I have before described, of the structure and machinery of the universe, he would soon conceive the idea of constructing some at least of the mechanical works we now have; and the idea so conceived would progressively advance in practice. Or could a model of the universe, such as is called an orrery, be presented before him and put in motion, his mind would arrive at the same idea. Such

an object and such a subject would, while it improved him in knowledge useful to himself as a man and a member of society, as well as entertaining, afford far better matter for impressing him with a knowledge of and a belief in the Creator, and of the reverence and gratitude that a man owes to him, than the stupid texts of the Bible and the Testament, from which, be the talents of the preacher what they may, only stupid sermons can be preached. If man must preach, let him preach something that is edifying, and from the texts that are known to be true.

The Bible of the Creation is inexhaustible in texts. Every part of the science, whether connected with the geometry of the universe, with the systems of animal and vegetable life, or with the properties of inanimate matter, is a text as well for devotion as for philosophy—for gratitude as for human improvement. It will perhaps be said that if such a revolution in the system of religion takes place, every preacher ought to be a philosopher. *Most certainly;* and every house of devotion a school of science.

It has been by wandering from the immutable laws of science and the light of reason, and setting up an invented thing called revealed religion, that so many wild and blasphemous conceits have been formed of the Almighty. The Jews have made him the assassin of the human species, to make room for the religion of the Jews. The Christians have made him the murderer of himself, and the founder of a new religion to supersede and expel the Jewish religion. And to find pretense and admission for these things, they must have supposed his power or his wisdom imperfect, or his will changeable; and the changeableness of the will is the imperfection of the judgment. The philosopher knows that the laws of the Creator have never changed with respect either to the principles of science or the properties of matter. Why, then, is it to be supposed they have changed with respect to man?

I here close the subject. I have shown in all the foregoing parts of this work that the Bible and Testament are impositions and forgeries; and I leave the evidence I have produced in proof

of it to be refuted, if anyone can do it; and I leave the ideas that are suggested in the conclusion of the work to rest on the mind of the reader; certain, as I am, that when opinions are free either in matters of government or religion, truth will finally and powerfully prevail.

## AGRARIAN JUSTICE

### PREFACE

The following little piece was written in the winter of 1795 and 1796; and as I had not determined whether to publish it during the present war or to wait till the commencement of a peace, it has lain by me, without addition, from the time it was written.

What has determined me to publish it now is a sermon preached by Watson, Bishop of Llandaff. Some of my readers will recollect, that this Bishop wrote a book, entitled "An Apology for the Bible," in answer to my "Second Part of the Age of Reason." I procured a copy of his book, and he may depend upon hearing from me on that subject.

At the end of the Bishop's book is a list of the works he has written, among which is the sermon alluded to; it is entitled "The Wisdom and Goodness of God in having made both rich and poor; with an Appendix containing Reflections on the present State of England and France."

The error contained in the title of this sermon, determined me to publish my *Agrarian Justice*. It is wrong to say that God made *Rich* and *Poor*; he made only *Male* and *Female*; and he gave them the earth for their inheritance.

Instead of preaching to encourage one part of mankind in insolence it would be better that the priests employed their time to render the condition of man less miserable than it is. Practical religion consists in doing good; and the only way of serving God is that of endeavoring to make his creation happy. All preaching that has not this for its object is nonsense and hypocrisy.

THOMAS PAINE.

[ARGUMENT FOR IMPROVING THE CONDITION  
OF THE UNPROPERTIED]

To preserve the benefits of what is called civilized life, and to remedy, at the same time, the evils it has produced, ought to be considered as one of the first objects of reformed legislation.

Whether that state that is proudly, perhaps erroneously, called civilization, has most promoted or most injured the general happiness of man, is a question that may be strongly contested. On one side the spectator is dazzled by splendid appearances; on the other he is shocked by extremes of wretchedness; both of which he has created. The most affluent and the most miserable of the human race are to be found in the countries that are called civilized.

To understand what the state of society ought to be, it is necessary to have some idea of the natural and primitive state of man; such as it is at this day among the Indians of North America. There is not, in that state, any of those spectacles of human misery which poverty and want present to our eyes in all the towns and streets in Europe. Poverty, therefore, is a thing created by that which is called civilized life. It exists not in the natural state. On the other hand, the natural state is without those advantages which flow from agriculture, arts, sciences, and manufactures.

The life of an Indian is a continual holiday, compared with the poor of Europe; and on the other hand, it appears to be abject when compared to the rich. Civilization, therefore, or that which is so called, has operated two ways, to make one part of society more affluent and the other part more wretched than would have been the lot of either in a natural state.

It is always possible to go from the natural to the civilized state, but it is never possible to go from the civilized to the natural state. The reason is that man in a natural state, subsisting by hunting, requires ten times the quantity of land to range over to procure himself sustenance, than would support him in a civilized state, where the earth is cultivated. When, therefore, a country becomes populous by the additional aids

of cultivation, arts, and science, there is a necessity of preserving things in that state; without it there cannot be sustenance for more, perhaps, than a tenth part of its inhabitants. The thing, therefore, now to be done is to remedy the evils and preserve the benefits that have arisen to society by passing from the natural to that which is called the civilized state.

Taking then the matter upon this ground, the first principle of civilization ought to have been, and ought still to be, that the condition of every person born into the world, after a state of civilization commences, ought not to be worse than if he had been born before that period. But the fact is that the condition of millions in every country in Europe is far worse than if they had been born before civilization began, or had been born among the Indians of North America of the present day. I will show how this fact has happened.

It is a position not to be controverted that the earth, in its natural uncultivated state, was and ever would have continued to be the COMMON PROPERTY OF THE HUMAN RACE. In that state every man would have been born to property. He would have been a joint life-proprietor with the rest in the property of the soil and in all its natural productions, vegetable and animal.

But the earth in its natural state, as before said, is capable of supporting but a small number of inhabitants compared with what it is capable of doing in a cultivated state. And as it is impossible to separate the improvement made by cultivation from the earth itself, upon which that improvement is made, the idea of landed property arose from that inseparable connection; but it is nevertheless true that it is the value of the improvement only, and not the earth itself, that is individual property. Every proprietor, therefore, of cultivated land owes to the community a *ground-rent*, for I know no better term to express the idea by, for the land which he holds; and it is from this ground-rent that the fund proposed in this plan is to issue.

It is deducible, as well from the nature of the thing as from all the histories transmitted to us, that the idea of landed property commenced with cultivation, and that there was no such thing as landed property before that time. It could not exist

in the first state of man, that of hunters; it did not exist in the second state, that of shepherds: neither Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, or Job, so far as the history of the Bible may be credited in probable things, were owners of land. Their property consisted, as is always enumerated, in flocks and herds, and they traveled with them from place to place. The frequent contentions at that time about the use of a well in the dry country of Arabia, where those people lived, show also there was no landed property. It was not admitted that land could be located as property.

There could be no such things as landed property originally. Man did not make the earth, and, though he had a natural right to *occupy* it, he had no right to *locate* as *his property* in perpetuity any part of it; neither did the Creator of the earth open a land-office, from whence the first title-deeds should issue. From whence then arose the idea of landed property? I answer as before, that when cultivation began, the idea of landed property began with it; from the impossibility of separating the improvement made by cultivation from the earth itself upon which that improvement was made. The value of the improvement so far exceeded the value of the natural earth, at that time, as to absorb it; till, in the end, the common right of all became confounded into the cultivated right of the individual. But they are nevertheless distinct species of rights, and will continue to be so as long as the world endures.

It is only by tracing things to their origin that we can gain rightful ideas of them; and it is by gaining such ideas that we discover the boundary that divides right from wrong, and which teaches every man to know his own. I have entitled this tract *Agrarian Justice*, to distinguish it from *Agrarian Law*. Nothing could be more unjust than Agrarian Law in a country improved by cultivation; for though every man, as an inhabitant of the earth, is a joint proprietor of it in its natural state, it does not follow that he is a joint proprietor of cultivated earth. The additional value made by cultivation, after the system was admitted, became the property of those who did

continued to be, the COMMON PROPERTY OF THE HUMAN RACE—that in that state every person would have been born to property—and that the system of landed property, by its inseparable connection with cultivation and with what is called civilized life, has absorbed the property of all those whom it dispossessed, without providing, as ought to have been done, an indemnification for that loss.

The fault, however, is not in the present possessors. No complaint is intended, or ought to be alleged against them, unless they adopt the crime by opposing justice. The fault is in the system, and it has stolen imperceptibly upon the world, aided afterwards by the Agrarian law of the sword. But the fault can be made to reform itself by successive generations without diminishing or deranging the property of any of the present possessors, and yet the operation of the fund can commence and be in full activity the first year of its establishment, or soon after, as I shall show.

It is proposed that the payments, as already stated, be made to every person, rich or poor. It is best to make it so, to prevent invidious distinctions. It is also right it should be so, because it is in lieu of the natural inheritance, which, as a right, belongs to every man over and above the property he may have created or inherited from those who did. Such persons as do not choose to receive it can throw it into the common fund.

Taking it then for granted that no person ought to be in a worse condition when born under what is called a state of civilization, than he would have been had he been born in a state of nature, and that civilization ought to have made, and ought still to make, provision for that purpose, it can only be done by subtracting from property a portion equal in value to the natural inheritance it has absorbed.

Various methods may be proposed for this purpose, but that which appears to be the best, not only because it will operate without deranging any present possessions, or without interfering with the collection of taxes, or emprunts necessary for the purpose of Government and the Revolution, but because it will be the least troublesome and the most effectual, and also

because the subtraction will be made at a time that best admits it, which is at the moment that property is passing by the death of one person to the possession of another. In this case the bequeather gives nothing; the receiver pays nothing. The only matter to him is that the monopoly of natural inheritance, to which there never was a right, begins to cease in his person. A generous man would wish it not to continue, and a just man will rejoice to see it abolished.

My state of health prevents my making sufficient inquiries with respect to the doctrine of probabilities, whereon to found calculations with such degrees of certainty as they are capable of. What, therefore, I offer on this head is more the result of observation and reflection than of received information; but I believe it will be found to agree sufficiently enough with fact.

In the first place, taking twenty-one years as the epoch of maturity, all the property of a Nation, real and personal, is always in the possession of persons above that age. It is then necessary to know, as a datum of calculation, the average of years which persons above that age will live. I take this average to be about thirty years, for though many persons will live forty, fifty, or sixty years after the age of twenty-one years, others will die much sooner, and some in every year of that time.

Taking, then, thirty years as the average of time, it will give without any material variation, one way or other, the average of time in which the whole property or capital of a Nation, or a sum equal thereto, will have passed through one entire revolution in descent, that is, will have gone by deaths to new possessors; for though, in many instances, some parts of this capital will remain forty, fifty, or sixty years in the possession of one person, other parts will have revolved two or three times before that thirty years expire, which will bring it to that average; for were one-half the capital of a Nation to revolve twice in thirty years it would produce the same fund as if the whole revolved once.

Taking, then, thirty years as the average of time in which the whole capital of a Nation, or a sum equal thereto, will revolve once, the thirtieth part thereof will be the sum that will re-

volve every year, that is, will go by deaths to new possessors; and this last sum being thus known, and the ratio per cent to be subtracted from it being determined, will give the annual amount or income of the proposed fund to be applied as already mentioned.

In looking over the discourse of the English Minister Pitt, in his opening of what is called in England *the budget* (the scheme of finance for the year 1796), I find an estimate of the national capital of that country. As this estimate of a national capital is prepared ready to my hand, I take it as a datum to act upon. When a calculation is made upon the known capital of any Nation combined with its population, it will serve as a scale for any other nation, in proportion as its capital and population be more or less. I am the more disposed to take this estimate of Mr. Pitt for the purpose of showing to that Minister, upon his own calculation, how much better money may be employed than in wasting it, as he has done, on the wild project of setting up Bourbon kings. What, in the name of Heaven, are Bourbon kings to the people of England? It is better that the people of England have bread.

Mr. Pitt states the national capital of England, real and personal, to be one thousand three hundred millions sterling, which is about one-fourth part of the national capital of France, including Belgia. The event of the last harvest in each country proves that the soil of France is more productive than that of England, and that it can better support twenty-four or twenty-five millions of inhabitants than that of England can seven, or seven and a half.

The thirtieth part of this capital of £1,300,000,000 is £43,333,333, which is the part that will revolve every year by deaths in that country to new possessors; and the sum that will annually revolve in France in the proportion of four to one, will be about one hundred and seventy-three millions sterling. From this sum of £43,333,333, annually revolving, is to be subtracted the value of the natural inheritance absorbed in it, which perhaps, in fair justice, cannot be taken at less, and ought not to be taken at more, than a tenth part.

It will always happen that of the property thus revolving by deaths every year, part will descend in a direct line to sons and daughters, and the other part collaterally, and the proportion will be found to be about three to one; that is, about thirty millions of the above sum will descend to direct heirs, and the remaining sum of £13,333,333 to more distant relations and part to strangers.

Considering then that man is always related to society, that relationship will become comparatively greater in proportion as the next of kin is more distant. It is therefore consistent with civilization to say that where there are no direct heirs, society shall be heir to a part over and above the tenth part due to society. If this additional part be from five to ten or twelve per cent in proportion as the next of kin be nearer or more remote, so as to average with the escheats that may fall, which ought always to go to society and not to the Government, an addition of ten per cent more, the produce from the annual sum of £43,333,333 will be,

From 30,000,000—at 10 per cent.....	£3,000,000
From 13,333,333—at 10 per cent with addition	
of 10 per cent more .....	2,666,666
<u>£43,333,333</u>	<u>£5,666,666</u>

Having thus arrived at the annual amount of the proposed fund, I come in the next place to speak of the population proportioned to this fund, and to compare it with the uses to which the fund is to be applied.

The population (I mean that of England) does not exceed seven millions and a half, and the number of persons above the age of fifty will in that case be about four hundred thousand. There would not, however, be more than that number that would accept the proposed ten pounds sterling per annum, though they would be entitled to it. I have no idea it would be accepted by many persons who had a yearly income of two or three hundred pounds sterling. But as we often see instances of rich people falling into sudden poverty, even at the

age of sixty, they would always have the right of drawing all the arrears due to them. Four millions, therefore, of the above sum of £5,666,666 will be required for four hundred thousand aged persons, at ten pounds sterling each.

I come now to speak of the persons annually arriving at twenty-one years of age. If all the persons who died were above the age of twenty-one years, the number of persons annually arriving at that age must be equal to the annual number of deaths to keep the population stationary. But the greater part die under the age of twenty-one, and therefore the number of persons annually arriving at twenty-one will be less than half the number of deaths. The whole number of deaths upon a population of seven millions and a half will be about 220,000 annually. The number at twenty-one years of age will be about 100,000. The whole number of these will not receive the proposed fifteen pounds for the reasons already mentioned, though, as in the former case, they would be entitled to it. Admitting, then, that a tenth part declined receiving it, the amount would stand thus:

Fund annually .....	£5,666,666
To 400,000 aged persons, at £10	
each.....	£4,000,000
To 90,000 persons of twenty-one	
years, £15 sterling each.....	£1,350,000
	5,350,000
Remains	£316,666

There are in every country a number of blind and lame persons totally incapable of earning a livelihood. But as it will happen that the greater number of blind persons will be among those who are above the age of fifty years, they will be provided for in that class. The remaining sum of £316,666 will provide for the lame and blind under that age at the same rate of £10 annually for each person.

Having now gone through all the necessary calculations and stated the particulars of the plan, I shall conclude with some observations.

It is not charity but a right—not bounty but justice, that I am pleading for. The present state of what is called civilization is the reverse of what it ought to be. The contrast of affluence and wretchedness continually meeting and offending the eye is like dead and living bodies chained together. Though I care as little about riches as any man, I am a friend to riches, because they are capable of good. I care not how affluent some may be, provided that none be miserable in consequence of it. But it is impossible to enjoy affluence with the felicity it is capable of being enjoyed, whilst so much misery is mingled in the scene. The sight of the misery and the unpleasant sensations it suggests, which though they may be suffocated cannot be extinguished, are a greater drawback upon the felicity of affluence than the proposed ten per cent upon property is worth. He that would not give the one to get rid of the other has no charity, even for himself.

There are in every country some magnificent charities established by individuals. It is, however, but little that any individual can do when the whole extent of the misery to be relieved is considered. He may satisfy his conscience, but not his heart. He may give all that he has, and that all will relieve but little. It is only by organizing civilization upon such principles as to act like a system of pulleys, that the whole weight of misery can be removed.

The plan here proposed will reach the whole. It will immediately relieve and take out of view three classes of wretchedness: the blind, the lame, and the aged poor. It will furnish the rising generation with means to prevent their becoming poor; and it will do this without deranging or interfering with any national measures.

To show that this will be the case, it is sufficient to observe that the operation and effect of the plan will, in all cases, be the same as if every individual was *voluntarily* to make his will and dispose of his property in the manner here proposed.

But it is justice, and not charity, that is the principle of the plan. In all great cases it is necessary to have a principle more universally active than charity; and with respect to justice, it

ought not to be left to the choice of detached individuals whether they will do justice or not. Considering, then, the plan on the ground, of justice, it ought to be the act of the whole, growing spontaneously out of the principles of the revolution, and the reputation of it to be national and not individual.

A plan upon this principle would benefit the revolution by the energy that springs from the consciousness of justice. It would multiply also the national resources; for property, like vegetation, increases by offsets. When a young couple begin the world, the difference is exceedingly great whether they begin with nothing or with fifteen pounds apiece. With this aid they could buy a cow and implements to cultivate a few acres of land; and instead of becoming burdens upon society, which is always the case where children are produced faster than they can be fed, they would be put in the way of becoming useful and profitable citizens. The national domains also would sell the better if pecuniary aids were provided to cultivate them in small lots.

It is the practice of what has unjustly obtained the name of civilization (and the practice merits not to be called either charity or policy) to make some provision for persons becoming poor and wretched only at the time they become so. Would it not, even as a matter of economy, be far better to devise means to prevent their becoming poor? This can best be done by making every person, when arrived at the age of twenty-one years, an inheritor of something to begin with. The rugged face of society, chequered with the extremes of affluence and of want, proves that some extraordinary violence has been committed upon it, and falls on justice for redress. The great mass of the poor in all countries are become an hereditary race, and it is next to impossible for them to get out of that state of themselves. It ought also to be observed that this mass increases in all the countries that are called civilized. More persons fall annually into it than get out of it.

Though in a plan in which justice and humanity are the foundation principles, interest ought not to be admitted into the

calculation, yet it is always of advantage to the establishment of any plan to show that it is beneficial as a matter of interest. The success of any proposed plan submitted to public consideration must finally depend on the numbers interested in supporting it, united with the justice of its principles.

The plan here proposed will benefit all without injuring any. It will consolidate the interest of the republic with that of the individual. To the numerous class dispossessed of their natural inheritance by the system of landed property, it will be an act of national justice. To persons dying possessed of moderate fortunes it will operate as a tontine to their children, more beneficial than the sum of money paid into the fund; and it will give to the accumulation of riches a degree of security that none of the old governments of Europe, now tottering on their foundation, can give.

I do not suppose that more than one family in ten in any of the countries of Europe has, when the head of the family dies, a clear property left of five hundred pounds sterling. To all such the plan is advantageous. That property would pay fifty pounds into the fund, and if there were only two children under age, they would receive fifteen pounds each (thirty pounds) on coming of age, and be entitled to ten pounds a year after fifty. It is from the overgrown acquisition of property that the fund will support itself; and I know that the possessors of such property in England, though they would eventually be benefited by the protection of nine-tenths of it, will exclaim against the plan. But, without entering into any inquiry how they came by that property, let them recollect that they have been the advocates of this war, and that Mr. Pitt has already laid on more new taxes to be raised annually upon the people of England, and that for supporting the despotism of Austria and the Bourbons against the liberties of France, than would annually pay all the sums proposed in this plan.

I have made the calculations, stated in this plan, upon what is called personal as well as upon landed property. The reason for making it upon land is already explained; and the reason for taking personal property into the calculation is equally

well founded, though on a different principle. Land, as before said, is the free gift of the Creator in common to the human race. Personal property is the *effect of society*; and it is as impossible for an individual to acquire personal property without the aid of society as it is for him to make land originally. Separate an individual from society, and give him an island or a continent to possess, and he cannot acquire personal property. He cannot become rich. So inseparably are the means connected with the end, in all cases, that where the former do not exist, the latter cannot be obtained. All accumulation, therefore, of personal property, beyond what a man's own hands produce, is derived to him by living in society; and he owes, on every principle of justice, of gratitude, and of civilization, a part of that accumulation back again to society from whence the whole came. This is putting the matter on a general principle, and perhaps it is best to do so; for if we examine the case minutely, it will be found that the accumulation of personal property is, in many instances, the effects of paying too little for the labor that produced it; the consequence of which is that the working hand perishes in old age and the employer abounds in affluence. It is, perhaps, impossible to proportion exactly the price of labor to the profits it produces; and it will also be said, as an apology for injustice, that were a workman to receive an increase of wages daily, he would not save it against old age nor be much the better for it in the interim. Make, then, society the treasurer to guard it for him in a common fund; for it is no reason that because he might not make a good use of it for himself, that another shall take it.

The state of civilization that has prevailed throughout Europe is as unjust in its principle as it is horrid in its effects; and it is the consciousness of this, and the apprehension that such a state cannot continue when once investigation begins in any country, that makes the possessors dread every idea of a revolution. It is the *hazard*, and not the principles of a revolution, that retards their progress. This being the case, it is necessary, as well for the protection of property as for the sake of justice and humanity, to form a system that while it pre-

serves one part of society from wretchedness shall secure the other from depredation.

The superstitious awe, the enslaving reverence that formerly surrounded affluence, is passing away in all countries and leaving the possessor of property to the convulsion of accidents. When wealth and splendor, instead of fascinating the multitude, excite emotions of disgust; when, instead of drawing forth admiration, it is beheld as an insult upon wretchedness; when the ostentatious appearance it makes serves to call the right of it in question, the case of property becomes critical and it is only in a system of justice that the possessor can contemplate security.

To remove the danger, it is necessary to remove the antipathies, and this can only be done by making property productive of a national blessing extending to every individual. When the riches of one man above another shall increase the national fund in the same proportion; when it shall be seen that the prosperity of that fund depends on the prosperity of individuals; when the more riches a man acquires, the better it shall be for the general mass; it is then that antipathies will cease and property be placed on the permanent basis of natural interest and protection.

I have no property in France to become subject to the plan I propose. What I have, which is not much, is in the United States of America. But I will pay one hundred pounds sterling towards this fund in France the instant it shall be established; and I will pay the same sum in England whenever a similar establishment shall take place in that country.

A revolution in the state of civilization is the necessary companion of revolutions in the system of government. If a revolution in any country be from bad to good, or from good to bad, the state of what is called civilization in that country must be made conformable thereto to give that revolution effect. Despotism supports itself by abject civilization in which debasement of the human mind and wretchedness in the mass of the people are the chief criterions. Such governments consider man merely as an animal; that the exercise of intel-

lectual faculty is not his privilege; *that he has nothing to do with the laws but to obey them*,<sup>1</sup> and they politically depend more upon breaking the spirit of the people by poverty than they fear enraging it by desperation.

It is a revolution in the state of civilization that will give perfection to the revolution of France. Already the conviction that government by representation is the true system of government is spreading itself fast in the world. The reasonableness of it can be seen by all. The justness of it makes itself felt even by its opposers. But when a system of civilization, growing out of that system of government, shall be so organized that not a man or woman born in the republic but shall inherit some means of beginning the world and see before them the certainty of escaping the miseries that under other governments accompany old age, the revolution of France will have an advocate and an ally in the heart of all nations.

An army of principles will penetrate where an army of soldiers cannot. It will succeed where diplomatic management would fail. It is neither the Rhine, the Channel, nor the Ocean, that can arrest its progress. It will march on the horizon of the world, and it will conquer.

MEANS FOR CARRYING THE PROPOSED PLAN  
INTO EXECUTION, AND TO RENDER IT  
AT THE SAME TIME CONDUCTIVE  
TO THE PUBLIC INTEREST

I. Each canton shall elect, in its primary assemblies, three persons as commissioners for that canton, who shall take cognizance, and keep a register of all matters happening in that canton, conformable to the charter that shall be established by law for carrying this plan into execution.

II. The law shall fix the manner in which the property of deceased persons shall be ascertained.

<sup>1</sup>Expression of Horsley, an English Bishop, in the English Parliament. [Paine's note.]

III. When the amount of the property of any deceased person shall be ascertained, the principal heir to that property, or the eldest of the co-heirs, if of lawful age, or if under age, the person authorized by the will of the deceased to represent him or them, shall give bond to the commissioners of the canton to pay the said tenth part thereof within the space of one year, in four equal quarterly payments or sooner at the choice of the payers. One-half of the whole property shall remain as security until the bond be paid off.

IV. The bonds shall be registered in the office of the commissioners of the canton, and the original bonds shall be deposited in the national bank at Paris. The bank shall publish every quarter of a year the amount of the bonds in its possession, and also the bonds that shall have been paid off, or what parts thereof, since the last quarterly publication.

V. The national bank shall issue bank notes upon the security of the bonds in its possession. The notes so issued shall be applied to pay the pensions of aged persons, and the compensation of persons arriving at twenty-one years of age. It is both reasonable and generous to suppose that persons not under immediate necessity will suspend their right of drawing on the fund until it acquire, as it will do, a greater degree of ability. In this case, it is proposed that an honorary register be kept in each canton of the names of the persons thus suspending that right, at least during the present war.

VI. As the inheritors of the property must always take up their bonds in four quarterly payments, or sooner if they choose, there will always be numeraire arriving at the bank after the expiration of the first quarter to exchange for the bank notes that shall be brought in.

VII. The bank notes being thus got into circulation upon the best of all possible security, that of actual property to more than four times the amount of the bonds upon which the notes are issued, and with numeraire continually arriving at the bank to exchange or pay them off whenever they shall be presented for that purpose, they will acquire a permanent value in all parts of the republic. They can therefore be received in pay-

ment of taxes or emprunts equal to numeraire, because the Government can always receive numeraire for them at the bank.

VIII. It will be necessary that the payments of the ten *per cent* be made in numeraire for the first year, from the establishment of the plan. But after the expiration of the first year, the inheritors of property may pay the ten *per cent* either in bank notes issued upon the fund or in numeraire. It will lie as a deposit at the bank, to be exchanged for a quantity of notes equal to that amount; and if in notes issued upon the fund, it will cause a demand upon the fund equal thereto; and thus the operation of the plan will create means to carry itself into execution.

## MISCELLANEOUS SELECTIONS

### *PUBLIC GOOD*

#### PREFACE

The following pages are on a subject hitherto little understood but highly interesting to the United States.

They contain an investigation of the claims of Virginia to the vacant western territory, and of the right of the United States to the same; with some outlines of a plan for laying out a new state to be applied as a fund for carrying on the war or redeeming the national debt.

The reader, in the course of this publication, will find it studiously plain and, as far as I can judge, perfectly candid. What materials I could get at I have endeavored to place in a clear line, and deduce such arguments therefrom as the subject required. In the prosecution of it I have considered myself as an advocate for the right of the states, and taken no other liberty with the subject than what a counsel would and ought to do in behalf of a client.

I freely confess that the respect I had conceived, and still preserve for the character of Virginia, was a constant check upon those sallies of imagination which are fairly and advantageously indulged against an enemy, but ungenerous when against a friend.

If there is anything I have omitted or mistaken, to the injury of Virginia or her claims, I shall gladly rectify it, or if there is anything yet to add, should the subject require it, I shall as cheerfully undertake it; being fully convinced that to have matters fairly discussed and properly understood is a principal means of preserving harmony and perpetuating friendship.

## PUBLIC GOOD

When we take into view the mutual happiness and united interests of the states of America, and consider the vast consequences to arise from a strict attention of each and of all to everything which is just, reasonable, and honorable; or the evils that will follow from an inattention to those principles; there cannot and ought not to remain a doubt but the governing rule of right and of mutual good must, in all public cases, finally preside.

The hand of providence has cast us into one common lot and accomplished the independence of America by the unanimous consent of the several parts, concurring at once in time, manner, and circumstances. No superiority of interest, at the expense of the rest, induced the one more than the other into the measure. Virginia and Maryland, it is true, might foresee that their staple commodity, tobacco, by being no longer monopolized by Britain, would bring them a better price abroad; for as the tax on it in England was treble its first purchase from the planter, and they being now no longer compelled to send it under that obligation and in the restricted manner they formerly were, it is easy to see that the article, from the alteration of the circumstances of trade, will, and daily does, turn out to them with additional advantages.

But this being a natural consequence, produced by that common freedom and independence of which all are partakers, is therefore an advantage they are entitled to and on which the rest of the states can congratulate them without feeling a wish to lessen but rather to extend it. To contribute to the increased prosperity of another, by the same means which occasion our own, is an agreeable reflection; and the more valuable any article of export becomes, the more riches will be introduced into and spread over the continent.

Yet this is an advantage which those two states derive from the independence of America, superior to the local circumstances of the rest; and of the two it more particularly belongs to Virginia than Maryland, because the staple commodity of a con-

siderable part of Maryland is flour, which, as it is an article that is the growth of Europe as well as of America, cannot obtain a foreign market but by underselling or at least by limiting it to the current price abroad. But tobacco commands its own price. It is not a plant of almost universal growth like wheat. There are but few soils and climes that produce it to advantage, and before the cultivation of it in Virginia and Maryland the price was from four to sixteen shillings sterling a pound in England.<sup>1</sup>

But the condition of the vacant western territory of America makes a very different case to that of the circumstances of trade in any of the states. Those very lands formed, in contemplation, the fund by which the debt of America would in the course of years be redeemed. They were considered as the common right of all; and it is only till lately that any pretension of claim has been made to the contrary.

That difficulties and differences will arise in communities ought always to be looked for. The opposition of interests real or supposed, the variety of judgments, the contrariety of temper, and, in short, the whole composition of man in his individual capacity is tinctured with a disposition to contend; but in his social capacity there is either a right which, being proved, terminates the dispute, or a reasonableness in the measure, where no direct right can be made out, which decides or compromises the matter.

As I shall have frequent occasion to mention the word *right*, I wish to be clearly understood in my definition of it. There are various senses in which this term is used, and custom has in many of them afforded it an introduction contrary to its true meaning. We are so naturally inclined to give the utmost degree of force to our own case that we call every pretension, however founded, *a right*; and by this means the term frequently stands opposed to justice and reason.

After Theodore was elected king of Corsica, not many years ago, by the mere choice of the natives for their own conven-

<sup>1</sup>See Sir Dalby Thomas's *Historical Account of the Rise and Growth of the West India Colonies*. [Paine's note.]

ience in opposing the Genoese, he went over to England, run himself in debt, got himself into jail, and on his release therefrom, by the benefit of an act of insolvency, he surrendered up what he called *his* kingdom of Corsica as a part of his personal property for the use of his creditors; some of whom may hereafter call this a charter, or by any other name more fashionable, and ground thereon what they may term a right to the sovereignty and property of Corsica. But does not justice abhor such an action both in him and them under the prostituted name of a *right*, and must not laughter be excited wherever it is told?

A right, to be truly so, must be right within itself; yet many things have obtained the name of rights, which are originally founded in wrong. Of this kind are all rights by mere conquest, power, or violence. In the cool moments of reflection we are obliged to allow that the mode by which such a right is obtained is not the best suited to that spirit of universal justice which ought to preside equally over all mankind. There is something in the establishment of such a right that we wish to slip over as easily as possible and say as little about as can be. But in the case of a *right founded in right*, the mind is carried cheerfully into the subject, feels no compunction, suffers no distress, subjects its sensations to no violence, nor sees anything in its way which requires an artificial smoothing.

From this introduction I proceed to examine into the claims of Virginia: first, as to the right; secondly, as to the reasonableness; and lastly, as to the consequences.

The claim being unreasonable in itself and standing on no ground of right, but such as, if true, must, from the quarter it is drawn, be offensive, has a tendency to create disgust and sour the minds of the rest of the states. Those lands are capable, under the management of the United States, of repaying the charges of the war, and some of them, as I shall hereafter show, may, I presume, be made an immediate advantage of.

I distinguish three different descriptions of land in America at the commencement of the revolution. Proprietary or chartered lands, as was the case in Pennsylvania; crown lands,

within the described limits of any of the crown governments; and crown residuary lands, that were without or beyond the limits of any province; and those last were held in reserve whereon to erect new governments and lay out new provinces; as appears to have been the design by Lord Hillsborough's letter, and the president's answer, wherein he says, "With respect to the establishment of a *new colony* on the *back* of Virginia, it is a subject of too great political importance for me to presume to give an opinion upon; however, permit me, my lord, to observe that when that part of the country shall become populated it may be a wise and prudent measure."

The expression is, a "*new colony* on the *back* of Virginia"; and referred to lands between the heads of the rivers and the Ohio. This is a proof that those lands were not considered within but beyond the limits of Virginia as a colony; and the other expression in the letter is equally descriptive, namely, "*We do not presume to say to whom our gracious sovereign shall grant his vacant lands.*" Certainly, then, the same right, which at that time rested in the crown, rests now in the more supreme authority of the United States; and therefore, addressing the president's letter to the circumstances of the revolution, it will run thus:

"We do not presume to say to whom the *sovereign United States* shall grant their vacant lands, and with respect to the settlement of a *new colony* on the *back* of Virginia, it is a matter of too much political importance for me to give an opinion upon; however, permit me to observe, that when that part of the country shall become populated it may be a wise and prudent measure."

It must occur to every person, on reflection, that those lands are too distant to be within the government of any of the present states; and I may presume to suppose, that were a calculation justly made, Virginia has lost more by the decrease of taxables, than she has gained by what lands she has made sale of; therefore, she is not only doing the rest of the states wrong in point of equity, but herself and them an injury in point of strength, service, and revenue.

It is only the United States, and not any single state, that can lay off new states, and incorporate them in the union by representation; therefore, the situation which the settlers on those lands will be in, under the assumed right of Virginia, will be hazardous and distressing, and they will feel themselves at last like the aliens to the commonwealth of Israel, their habitations unsafe and their title precarious.

And when men reflect on that peace, harmony, quietude, and security, which are necessary to prosperity, especially in making new settlements, and think that when the war shall be ended, their happiness and safety will depend on a union with the states, and not a scattered people, unconnected with and politically unknown to the rest, they will feel but little inclination to put themselves in a situation which, however solitary and reclusive it may appear at present, will then be uncertain and unsafe, and their troubles will have to begin where those of the United States shall end.

It is probable that some of the inhabitants of Virginia may be inclined to suppose that the writer of this, by taking up the subject in the manner he has done, is arguing unfriendly against their interest. To which he wishes to reply:

That the most extraordinary part of the whole is that Virginia should countenance such a claim. For it is worthy of observing that from the beginning of the contest with Britain, and long after, there was not a people in America who discovered, through all the variety and multiplicity of public business, a greater fund of true wisdom, fortitude, and disinterestedness, than the then colony of Virginia. They were loved, they were revered. Their investigation of the assumed rights of Britain had a sagacity which was uncommon. Their reasonings were piercing, difficult to be equalled and impossible to be refuted, and their public spirit was exceeded by none. But since this unfortunate land scheme has taken place, their powers seem to be absorbed; a torpor has overshadowed them, and every one asks, What is become of Virginia?

It seldom happens that the romantic schemes of extensive dominion are of any service to a government, and never to a

people. They assuredly end at last in loss, trouble, division, and disappointment. And was even the title of Virginia good and the claim admissible, she would derive more lasting and real benefit by participating in it than by attempting the management of an object so infinitely beyond her reach. Her share with the rest, under the supremacy of the United States, which is the only authority adequate to the purpose, would be worth more to her than what the whole would produce under the management of herself alone. And that for several reasons:

1st, Because her claim not being admissible nor yet manageable, she cannot make a good title to the purchasers, and consequently can get but little for the lands.

2d, Because the distance the settlers will be from her will immediately put them out of all government and protection so far at least as relates to Virginia; and by this means she will render her frontiers a refuge to desperadoes and a hiding place from justice; and the consequence will be perpetual unsafety to her own peace and that of the neighboring states.

3d, Because her quota of expense for carrying on the war, admitting her to engross such an immensity of territory, would be greater than she can either support or supply, and could not be less, upon a reasonable rule of proportion, than nine-tenths of the whole. And,

4th, Because she must sooner or later relinquish them; therefore to see her own interest wisely at first is preferable to the alternative of finding it out by misfortune at last.

I have now gone through my examination of the claim of Virginia in every case which I proposed; and for several reasons wish the lot had fallen to another person. But as this is a most important matter in which all are interested, and the substantial good of Virginia not injured but promoted, and as few men have leisure and still fewer have inclination to go into intricate investigation, I have at last ventured on the subject.

The succession of the United States to the vacant western territory is a right they originally set out upon; and in the pamphlet, *Common Sense*, I frequently mentioned those lands

as a national fund for the benefit of all; therefore, resuming the subject where I then left off, I shall conclude with concisely reducing to system what I then only hinted.

In my last piece, the "Crisis Extraordinary," I estimated the annual amount of the charge of war and the support of the several governments at two million pounds sterling, and the peace establishment at three quarters of a million, and, by a comparison of the taxes of this country with those of England, proved that the whole yearly expense to us to defend the country is but a third of what Britain would have drawn from us by taxes had she succeeded in her attempt to conquer; and our peace establishment only an eighth part; and likewise showed that it was within the ability of the states to carry on the whole of the war by taxation without having recourse to any other modes or funds. To have a clear idea of taxation is necessary to every country, and the more funds we can discover and organize, the less will be the hope of the enemy and the readier their disposition to peace, which it is now *their* interest more than *ours* to promote.

I have already remarked that only the United States, and not any particular state, can lay off new states and incorporate them into the union by representation; keeping, therefore, this idea in view, I ask, might not a substantial fund be quickly created by laying off a new state, so as to contain between twenty and thirty millions of acres, and opening a land office in all countries in Europe for hard money, and in this country for supplies in kind, at a certain price.

The tract of land that seems best adapted to answer this purpose is contained between the Allegheny Mountains and the river Ohio, as far north as the Pennsylvania line, thence extending down the said river to the falls thereof, thence due south into the latitude of the North Carolina line, and thence east to the Allegheny Mountains aforesaid. I the more readily mention this tract because it is fighting the enemy with their own weapons, as it includes the same ground on which a new colony would have been erected for the emolument of the crown of England, as appears by the letters of Lords Hills-

borough and Dartmouth, had not the revolution prevented its being carried into effect.

It is probable that there may be some spots of private property within this tract, but to incorporate them into some government will render them more profitable to the owners, and the condition of the scattered settlers more eligible and happy than at present.

If twenty millions of acres of this new state be patented and sold at twenty pounds sterling per hundred acres, they will produce four million pounds sterling, which, if applied to continental expenses only, will support the war for three years, should Britain be so unwise as to prosecute it against her own direct interest and against the interest and policy of all Europe. The several states will then have to raise taxes for their internal government only, and the continental taxes, as soon as the fund begins to operate, will lessen, and if sufficiently productive, will cease.

Lands are the real riches of the habitable world, and the natural funds of America. The funds of other countries are, in general, artificially constructed; the creatures of necessity and contrivance; dependent upon credit, and always exposed to hazard and uncertainty. But lands can neither be annihilated nor lose their value; on the contrary, they universally rise with population, and rapidly so, when under the security of effectual government. But this it is impossible for Virginia to give, and therefore that which is capable of defraying the expenses of the empire will, under the management of any single state, produce only a fugitive support to wandering individuals.

I shall now inquire into the effects which the laying out a new state, under the authority of the United States, will have upon Virginia. It is the very circumstance she ought to, and must, wish for when she examines the matter in all its bearings and consequences.

The present settlers beyond her reach, and her supposed authority over them remaining in herself, they will appear to her as revolters, and she to them as oppressors; and this will produce such a spirit of mutual dislike that in a little time a

total disagreement will take place to the disadvantage of both. But under the authority of the United States the matter is manageable, and Virginia will be eased of a disagreeable consequence.

Besides this, a sale of the lands, continentally, for the purpose of supporting the expense of the war, will save her a greater share of taxes than the small sale which she could make herself and the small price she could get for them would produce.

She would likewise have two advantages which no other state in the union enjoys; first, a frontier state for her defense against the incursions of the Indians; and the second is that the laying out and peopling a new state on the back of an old one, situated as she is, is doubling the quantity of its trade.

The new state, which is here proposed to be laid out, may send its exports down the Mississippi, but its imports must come through Chesapeake Bay, and consequently Virginia will become the market for the new state; because, though there is a navigation from it, there is none into it on account of the rapidity of the Mississippi.

There are certain circumstances that will produce certain events whether men think of them or not. The events do not depend upon thinking, but are the natural consequence of acting; and according to the system which Virginia has gone upon, the issue will be that she will get involved with the back settlers in a contention about *rights*, till they dispute with their own claims; and, soured by the contention, will go to any other state for their commerce; both of which may be prevented, a perfect harmony established, the strength of the states increased, and the expenses of the war defrayed, by settling the matter now on the plan of a general right; and every day it is delayed, the difficulty will be increased and the advantages lessened.

But if it should happen, as it possibly may, that the war should end before the money, which the new state may produce, be expended, the remainder of the lands therein may be

set apart to reimburse those whose houses have been burnt by the enemy, as this is a species of suffering which it was impossible to prevent, because houses are not movable property; and it ought not to be that, because we cannot do everything, we ought not to do what we can.

Having said this much on the subject, I think it necessary to remark that the prospect of a new fund, so far from abating our endeavors in making every immediate provision for the army, ought to quicken us therein; for should the states see it expedient to go upon the measure, it will be at least a year before it can be productive. I the more freely mention this because there is a dangerous species of popularity, which, I fear, some men are seeking from their constituents by giving them grounds to believe that if they are elected they will lighten the taxes; a measure which, in the present state of things, cannot be done without exposing the country to the ravages of the enemy by disabling the army from defending it.

Where knowledge is a duty, ignorance is a crime; and if any man whose duty it was to know better has encouraged such an expectation, he has either deceived himself or them: besides, no country can be defended without expense, and let any man compare his portion of temporary inconveniences arising from taxation with the real distresses of the army for the want of supplies, and the difference is not only sufficient to strike him dumb, but make him thankful that worse consequences have not followed.

In advancing this doctrine, I speak with an honest freedom to the country; for as it is their good to be defended, so it is their interest to provide that defense, at least till other funds can be organized.

As the laying out new states will some time or other be the business of the country, and as it is yet a new business to us and as the influence of the war has scarcely afforded leisure for reflecting on distant circumstances, I shall throw together a few hints for facilitating that measure whenever it may be proper for adopting it.

The United States now standing on the line of sovereignty,

the vacant territory is their property collectively, but the persons by whom it may hereafter be peopled will also have an equal right with ourselves; and therefore, as new states shall be laid off and incorporated with the present, they will become partakers of the remaining territory with us who are already in possession. And this consideration ought to heighten the value of lands to new emigrants because, in making the purchases, they not only gain an immediate property, but become initiated into the right and heirship of the states to a property in reserve, which is an additional advantage to what any purchasers under the late government of England enjoyed.

The setting off the boundary of any new state will naturally be the first step, and as it must be supposed not to be peopled at the time it is laid off, a constitution must be formed by the United States as the rule of government in any new state for a certain term of years (perhaps ten) or until the state becomes peopled to a certain number of inhabitants; after which the whole and sole right of modeling their government to rest with themselves.

A question may arise whether a new state should immediately possess an equal right with the present ones in all cases which may come before congress.

This experience will best determine; but at a first view of the matter it appears thus: that it ought to be immediately incorporated into the union on the ground of a family right, such a state standing in the line of a younger child of the same stock; but as new emigrants will have something to learn when they first come to America, and a new state requiring aid rather than capable of giving it, it might be most convenient to admit its immediate representation into congress, there to sit, hear, and debate on all questions and matters, but not to vote on any till after the expiration of seven years.

I shall in this place take the opportunity of renewing a hint which I formerly threw out in the pamphlet, *Common Sense*, and which the several states will, sooner or later, see the convenience if not the necessity of adopting; which is that of electing a continental convention for the purpose of forming a

continental constitution, defining and describing the powers and authority of congress.

Those of entering into treaties and making peace they naturally possess, in behalf of the states, for their separate as well as their united good, but the internal control and dictatorial powers of congress are not sufficiently defined, and appear to be too much in some cases and too little in others; and, therefore, to have them marked out legally will give additional energy to the whole, and a new confidence to the several parts.

## LETTER ADDRESSED TO THE ADDRESSERS ON THE LATE PROCLAMATION

Could I have commanded circumstances with a wish, I know not of any that would have more generally promoted the progress of knowledge than the late Proclamation and the numerous rotten borough and corporation Addresses thereon. They have not only served as advertisements, but they have excited a spirit of inquiry into principles of government, and a desire to read *The Rights of Man* in places where that spirit and that work were before unknown.

But how will the persons who have been induced to read the *Rights of Man* by the clamor that has been raised against it be surprised to find that, instead of a wicked, inflammatory work, instead of a licentious and profligate performance, it abounds with principles of government that are uncontrovertible—with arguments which every reader will feel are unanswerable—with plans for the increase of commerce and manufactures—for the extinction of war—for the education of the children of the poor—for the comfortable support of the aged and decayed persons of both sexes—for the relief of the army and navy and, in short, for the promotion of everything that can benefit the moral, civil, and political condition of man.

Why then, some calm observer will ask, why is the work prosecuted, if these be the goodly matters it contains? I will tell thee, friend; it contains also a plan for the reduction of taxes, for lessening the immense expenses of government, for abolishing sinecure places and pensions; and it proposes applying the redundant taxes, that shall be saved by these reforms, to the purposes mentioned in the former paragraph, instead of applying them to the support of idle and profligate placemen and pensioners.

Is it, then, any wonder that placemen and pensioners, and the whole train of court expectants, should become the pro-

moters of addresses, proclamations, and prosecutions? Or, is it any wonder that corporations and rotten boroughs, which are attacked and exposed, both in the First and Second Parts of *Rights of Man*, as unjust monopolies and public nuisances, should join in the cavalcade? Yet these are the sources from which addresses have sprung. Had not such persons come forward to oppose the *Rights of Man*, I should have doubted the efficacy of my own writings; but those opposers have now proved to me that the blow was well directed, and they have done it justice by confessing the smart.

The principal deception in this business of addresses has been, that the promoters of them have not come forward in their proper characters. They have assumed to pass themselves upon the public as a part of the public, bearing a share of the burden of taxes, and acting for the public good; whereas, they are in general that part of it that adds to the public burden by living on the produce of the public taxes. They are to the public what the locusts are to the tree: the burden would be less, and the prosperity would be greater, if they were shaken off.

"I do not come here," said Onslow, at the Surrey County meeting, "as the Lord Lieutenant and *Custos Rotulorum* of the county, but I come here as a plain country gentleman." The fact is that he came there as what he was, and as no other, and consequently he came as one of the beings I have been describing. If it be the character of a gentleman to be fed by the public as a pauper is by the parish, Onslow has a fair claim to the title; and the same description will suit the Duke of Richmond who led the Address at the Sussex meeting. He also may set up for a gentleman.

As to the meeting in the next adjoining county (Kent), it was a scene of disgrace. About two hundred persons met, when a small part of them drew privately away from the rest, and voted an Address: the consequence of which was that they got together by the ears, and produced a riot on the very act of producing an address to prevent riots.

That the proclamation and the addresses have failed of their

intended effect may be collected from the silence which the government party itself observes. The number of addresses has been weekly retailed in the *Gazette*; but the number of addressers has been concealed. Several of the addresses have been voted by not more than ten or twelve persons; and a considerable number of them by not more than thirty. The whole number of addresses presented at the time of writing this letter is three hundred and twenty (rotten boroughs and corporations included), and even admitting, on an average, one hundred addressers to each address, the whole number of addressers would be but thirty-two thousand, and nearly three months have been taken up in procuring this number. That the success of the proclamation has been less than the success of the work it was intended to discourage, is a matter within my own knowledge; for a greater number of the cheap edition of the First and Second Parts of the *Rights of Man* has been sold in the space only of one month than the whole number of addressers (admitting them to be thirty-two thousand) have amounted to in three months.

It is a dangerous attempt in any government to say to a nation, "*thou shalt not read.*" This is now done in Spain, and was formerly done under the old government of France; but it served to procure the downfall of the latter, and is subverting that of the former; and it will have the same tendency in all countries; because *thought* by some means or other is got abroad in the world, and cannot be restrained, though reading may.

If *Rights of Man* were a book that deserved the vile description which the promoters of the address have given of it, why did not these men prove their charge, and satisfy the people by producing it and reading it publicly? This most certainly ought to have been done, and would also have been done, had they believed it would have answered their purpose. But the fact is that the book contains truths which those timeservers dreaded to hear, and dreaded that the people should know; and it is now following up the addresses in every part of the nation, and convicting them of falsehoods.

Among the unwarrantable proceedings to which the proclamation has given rise, the meetings of the justices in several of the towns and counties ought to be noticed. Those men have assumed to re-act the farce of general warrants, and to suppress by their own authority whatever publications they please. This is an attempt at power equaled only by the conduct of the minor despots of the most despotic governments in Europe, and yet those justices affect to call England a free country. But even this, perhaps, like the scheme for garrisoning the country by building military barracks, is necessary to awaken the country to a sense of its rights, and as such it will have a good effect.

Another part of the conduct of such justices has been that of threatening to take away the licenses from taverns and public houses where the inhabitants of the neighborhood associated to read and discuss the principles of government, and to inform each other thereon. This, again, is similar to what is doing in Spain and Russia; and the reflection which it cannot fail to suggest is that the principles and conduct of any government must be bad when that government dreads and startles at discussion, and seeks security by a prevention of knowledge.

If the government, or the constitution, or by whatever name it be called, be that miracle of perfection which the proclamation and the addresses have trumpeted it forth to be, it ought to have defied discussion and investigation, instead of dreading it. Whereas, every attempt it makes, either by proclamation, prosecution, or address, to suppress investigation, is a confession that it feels itself unable to bear it. It is error only, and not truth, that shrinks from inquiry. All the numerous pamphlets and all the newspaper falsehood and abuse that have been published against the *Rights of Man* have fallen before it like pointless arrows; and, in like manner, would any work have fallen before the constitution had the constitution, as it is called, been founded on as good political principles as those on which the *Rights of Man* is written.

It is a good constitution for courtiers, placemen, pensioners, borough-holders, and the leaders of parties, and these are the men that have been the active leaders of addresses; but it is a

bad constitution for at least ninety-nine parts of the nation out of a hundred, and this truth is every day making its way.

It is bad, first, because it entails upon the nation the unnecessary expense of supporting three forms and systems of government at once, namely, the monarchical, the aristocratical, and the democratical.

Secondly, because it is impossible to unite such a discordant composition by any other means than perpetual corruption; and therefore the corruption so loudly and so universally complained of is no other than the natural consequence of such an unnatural compound of governments; and in this consists that excellence which the numerous herd of placemen and pensioners so loudly extol, and which at the same time occasions that enormous load of taxes under which the rest of the nation groans.

Among the mass of national delusions calculated to amuse and impose upon the multitude, the standing one has been that of flattering them into taxes by calling the Government (or as they please to express it, the English Constitution) "*the envy and the admiration of the world.*" Scarcely an address has been voted in which some of the speakers have not uttered this hackneyed nonsensical falsehood.

Two revolutions have taken place, those of America and France; and both of them have rejected the unnatural compounded system of the English government. America has declared against all hereditary government, and established the representative system of government only. France has entirely rejected the aristocratical part, and is now discovering the absurdity of the monarchical, and is approaching fast to the representative system. On what ground, then, do these men continue a declaration, respecting what they call the *envy and admiration of other nations*, which the voluntary practice of such nations as have had the opportunity of establishing government contradicts and falsifies? Will such men never confine themselves to truth? Will they be forever the deceivers of the people?

But I will go further, and show that, were government now to

begin in England, the people could not be brought to establish the same system they now submit to.

In speaking on this subject (or on any other) *on the pure ground of principle*, antiquity and precedent cease to be authority, and hoaryheaded error loses its effect. The reasonableness and propriety of things must be examined abstractedly from custom and usage; and, in this point of view, the right which grows into practice today is as much a right, and as old in principle and theory, as if it had the customary sanction of a thousand ages. Principles have no connection with time, nor characters with names.

To say that the government of this country is composed of King, Lords, and Commons, is the mere phraseology of custom. It is composed of men; and whoever the men be to whom the government of any country is intrusted, they ought to be the best and wisest that can be found, and if they are not so, they are not fit for the station. A man derives no more excellence from the change of a name, or calling him king, or calling him lord, than I should do by changing my name from Thomas to George, or from Paine to Guelph. I should not be a whit more able to write a book because my name was altered; neither would any man, now called a king or a lord, have a whit the more sense than he now has were he to call himself Thomas Paine.

As to the word "Commons," applied as it is in England, it is a term of degradation and reproach, and ought to be abolished. It is a term unknown in free countries.

But to the point. Let us suppose that government was now to begin in England, and that the plan of government offered to the nation, for its approbation or rejection, consisted of the following parts:

First—That some one individual should be taken from all the rest of the nation, and to whom all the rest should swear obedience, and never be permitted to sit down in his presence, and that they should give to him one million sterling a year. That the nation should never after have power or authority to make laws but with his express consent; and that his sons and his sons'

sons, whether wise or foolish, good men or bad, fit or unfit, should have the same power, and also the same money annually paid to them forever.

Secondly—That there should be two houses of legislators to assist in making laws, one of which should, in the first instance, be entirely appointed by the aforesaid person, and that their sons and their sons' sons, whether wise or foolish, good men or bad, fit or unfit, should forever after be hereditary legislators.

Thirdly—That the other house should be chosen in the same manner as the house now called the House of Commons is chosen, and should be subject to the control of the two aforesaid hereditary powers in all things.

It would be impossible to cram such a farrago of imposition and absurdity down the throat of this or any other nation that was capable of reasoning upon its rights and its interest.

They would ask, in the first place, on what ground of right, or on what principle, such irrational and preposterous distinctions could, or ought to be made; and what pretensions any man could have, or what services he could render, to entitle him to a million a year? They would go farther, and revolt at the idea of consigning their children and their children's children to the domination of persons hereafter to be born, who might, for anything they could foresee, turn out to be knaves or fools; and they would finally discover, that the project of hereditary governors and legislators *was a treasonable usurpation over the rights of posterity*. Not only the calm dictates of reason, and the force of natural affection, but the integrity of manly pride, would impel men to spurn such proposals.

From the grosser absurdities of such a scheme they would extend their examination to the practical defects. They would soon see that it would end in tyranny accomplished by fraud. That in the operation of it, it would be two to one against them, because the two parts that were to be made hereditary would form a common interest, and stick to each other; and that themselves and representatives would become no better than hewers of wood and drawers of water for the other parts of the government. Yet call one of those powers King, the other Lords, and

third the Commons, and it gives the model of what is called the English Government.

I have asserted, and have shown, both in the First and Second Parts of *Rights of Man*, that there is not such a thing as an English Constitution, and that the people have yet a constitution to form. *A constitution is a thing antecedent to a government; it is the act of a people creating a government and giving it powers, and defining the limits and exercise of the powers so given.* But whenever did the people of England, acting in their original constituent character, by a delegation elected for that express purpose, declare and say, "*We, the people of this land, do constitute and appoint this to be our system and form of government.*" The government has assumed to constitute itself, but it never was constituted by the people, in whom alone the right of constituting resides.

I will here recite the preamble to the Federal Constitution of the United States of America. I have shown in the Second Part of *Rights of Man*, the manner by which the constitution was formed and afterwards ratified; and to which I refer the reader. The preamble is in the following words:

"WE, THE PEOPLE, of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquillity, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, DO ORDAIN AND ESTABLISH THIS CONSTITUTION for the United States of America."

Then follow the several articles which appoint the manner in which the several component parts of the government, legislative and executive, shall be elected, and the period of their duration, and the powers they shall have; also, the manner by which future additions, alterations, or amendments shall be made to the constitution. Consequently, every improvement that can be made in the science of government follows in that country as a matter of order. It is only in governments founded on assumption and false principles that reasoning upon and investigating systems and principles of government, and showing

their several excellences and defects, are termed libelous and seditious. These terms were made part of the charge brought against Locke, Hampden, and Sydney, and will continue to be brought against all good men so long as bad government shall continue.

The government of this country has been ostentatiously giving challenges, for more than a hundred years past, upon what it called its own excellence and perfection. Scarcely a king's speech or a parliamentary speech has been uttered in which this glove has not been thrown, till the world has been insulted with their challenges. But it now appears that all this was vapor and vain boasting, or that it was intended to conceal abuses and defects, and hush the people into taxes. I have taken the challenge up, and in behalf of the public have shown, in a fair, open, and candid manner, both the radical and practical defects of the system; when, lo! those champions of the Civil List have fled away, and sent the Attorney-General to deny the challenge, by turning the acceptance of it into an attack and defending their places and pensions by a prosecution.

If to expose the fraud and imposition of monarchy, and every species of hereditary government—to lessen the oppression of taxes—to propose plans for the education of helpless infancy and the comfortable support of the aged and distressed—to endeavor to conciliate nations to each other—to extirpate the horrid practice of war—to promote universal peace, civilization, and commerce—and to break the chains of political superstition, and raise degraded man to his proper rank;—if these things be libelous, let me live the life of a libeler, and let the name of LIBELER be engraved on my tomb.

Of all the weak and ill-judged measures which fear, ignorance, or arrogance could suggest, the proclamation and the project for addresses are two of the worst. They served to advertise the work which the promoters of those measures wished to keep unknown; and in doing this they offered violence to the judgment of the people by calling on them to condemn what they forbade them to know, and put the strength

of their party to that hazardous issue that prudence would have avoided. The county meeting for Middlesex was attended by only one hundred and eighteen addressers. They, no doubt, expected that thousands would flock to their standard and clamor against the *Rights of Man*. But the case, most probably, is that men in all countries are not so blind to their rights and their interest as governments believe.

Having thus shown the extraordinary manner in which the government party commenced their attack, I proceed to offer a few observations on the prosecution, and on the mode of trial by special jury.

In the first place, I have written a book; and if it cannot be refuted, it cannot be condemned. But I do not consider the prosecution as particularly leveled against me, but against the general right, or the right of every man, of investigating systems and principles of government, and showing their several excellences or defects. If the press be free only to flatter government, as Mr. Burke has done, and to cry up and extol what certain court sycophants are pleased to call a "glorious constitution," and not free to examine into its errors or abuses, or whether a constitution really exist or not, such freedom is no other than that of Spain, Turkey, or Russia; and a jury in this case would not be a jury to try, but an inquisition to condemn.

I have asserted, and by fair and open argument maintained, the right of every nation at all times to establish such a system and form of government for itself as best accords with its disposition, interest, and happiness; and to change and alter it as it sees occasion. Will any jury deny to the nation this right? If they do, they are traitors, and their verdict would be null and void. And if they admit the right, the means must be admitted also; for it would be the highest absurdity to say that the right existed, but the means did not. The question then is, What are the means by which the possession and exercise of this national right are to be secured? The answer will be that of maintaining, inviolably, the right of free investigation; for investigation always serves to detect error, and to bring forth truth.

I have, as an individual, given my opinion upon what I be-

lieve to be not only the best, but the true system of government, which is the representative system, and I have given reasons for that opinion.

First, because in the representative system, no office of very extraordinary power, or extravagant pay, is attached to any individual; and consequently there is nothing to excite those national contentions and civil wars with which countries under monarchical governments are frequently convulsed, and of which the history of England exhibits such numerous instances.

Secondly, because the representative is a system of government always in maturity; whereas monarchical government fluctuates through all the stages, from non-age to dotage.

Thirdly, because the representative system admits of none but men properly qualified into the government, or removes them if they prove to be otherwise. Whereas, in the hereditary system, a nation may be encumbered with a knave or an idiot for a whole lifetime, and not be benefited by a successor.

Fourthly, because there does not exist a right to establish hereditary government, or, in other words, hereditary successors, because hereditary government always means a government yet to come, and the case always is that those who are to live afterwards have the same right to establish government for themselves as the people had who lived before them; and, therefore, all laws attempting to establish hereditary government are founded on assumption and political fiction.

If these positions be truths, and I challenge any man to prove the contrary; if they tend to instruct and enlighten mankind, and to free them from error, oppression, and political superstition, which are the objects I have in view in publishing them, that jury would commit an act of injustice to their country and to me, if not an act of perjury, that should call them *false*, *wicked*, and *malicious*.

I consider the reform of parliament by an application to parliament, as proposed by the Society, to be a worn-out hackneyed subject, about which the nation is tired, and the parties are deceiving each other. It is not a subject that is

the rights of people are, they have a right to them, and none have a right either to withhold them or to grant them. Government ought to be established on such principles of justice as to exclude the occasion of all such applications, for wherever they appear they are virtually accusations.

I wish that Mr. Grey, since he has embarked in the business, would take the whole of it into consideration. He will then see that the right of reforming the state of the representation does not reside in parliament, and that the only motion he could consistently make would be that parliament should *recommend* the election of a convention of the people, because all pay taxes. But whether parliament recommended it or not, the right of the nation would neither be lessened nor increased thereby.

As to petitions from the unrepresented part, they ought not to be looked for. As well might it be expected that Manchester, Sheffield, &c. should petition the rotten boroughs, as that they should petition the representatives of those boroughs. Those two towns alone pay far more taxes than all the rotten boroughs put together, and it is scarcely to be expected they should pay their court either to the boroughs or the borough-mongers.

It ought also to be observed that what is called parliament is composed of two houses that have always declared against the right of each other to interfere in any matter that related to the circumstances of either, particularly that of election. A reform, therefore, in the representation cannot, on the ground they have individually taken, become the subject of an act of parliament, because such a mode would include the interference against which the commons on their part have protested; but must, as well on the ground of formality as on that of right, proceed from a national convention.

Having thus endeavored to show what the abject condition of parliament is, and the impropriety of going a second time over the same ground that has before miscarried, I come to the remaining part of the subject.

There ought to be in the constitution of every country a mode of referring back, on any extraordinary occasion, to the

sovereign and original constituent power, which is the nation itself. The right of altering any part of a government cannot, as already observed, reside in the government, or that government might make itself what it pleased.

It ought also to be taken for granted that though a nation may feel inconveniences, either in the excess of taxation, or in the mode of expenditure, or in anything else, it may not at first be sufficiently assured in what part of its government the defect lies, or where the evil originates. It may be supposed to be in one part, and on inquiry be found to be in another; or partly in all. This obscurity is naturally interwoven with what are called mixed governments.

Be, however, the reform to be accomplished whatever it may, it can only follow in consequence of obtaining a full knowledge of all the causes that have rendered such reform necessary, and everything short of this is guesswork or frivolous cunning. In this case it cannot be supposed that any application to parliament can bring forward this knowledge. That body is itself the supposed cause, or one of the supposed causes, of the abuses in question; and cannot be expected, and ought not to be asked, to give evidence against itself. The inquiry, therefore, which is of necessity the first step in the business, cannot be trusted to parliament, but must be undertaken by a distinct body of men, separated from every suspicion of corruption or influence.

Instead, then, of referring to rotten boroughs and absurd corporations for addresses, or hawking them about the country to be signed by a few dependent tenants, the real and effectual mode would be to come at once to the point and to ascertain the sense of the nation by electing a national convention. By this method, as already observed, the general WILL, whether to reform or not, or what the reform shall be, or how far it shall extend, will be known, and it cannot be known by any other means. Such a body, empowered and supported by the nation, will have authority to demand information upon all matters necessary to be inquired into; and no minister, nor any person, will dare to refuse it. It will then be seen whether

seventeen millions of taxes are necessary, and for what purposes they are expended. The concealed pensioners will then be obliged to unmask; and the source of influence and corruption, if any such there be, will be laid open to the nation, not for the purpose of revenge, but of redress.

By taking this public and national ground, all objections against partial addresses on the one side, or private associations on the other, will be done away; THE NATION WILL DECLARE ITS OWN REFORMS; and the clamor about party and faction, or ins or outs, will become ridiculous.

The plan and organization of a convention is easy in practice.

In the first place, the number of inhabitants in every county can be sufficiently ascertained from the number of houses assessed to the house and window-light tax in each county. This will give the rule for apportioning the number of members to be elected to the national convention in each of the counties.

If the total number of inhabitants in England be seven millions, and the total number of members to be elected to the convention be one thousand, the number of members to be elected in a county containing one hundred and fifty thousand inhabitants will be *twenty-one*, and in like proportion for any other county.

As the election of a convention must, in order to ascertain the general sense of the nation, go on grounds different from that of parliamentary elections, the mode that best promises this end will have no difficulties to combat with from absurd customs and pretended rights. The right of every man will be the same, whether he lives in a city, a town, or a village. The custom of attaching rights to *place*, or in other words, to inanimate matter, instead of to the *person*, independently of place, is too absurd to make any part of a rational argument.

As every man in the nation, of the age of twenty-one years, pays taxes, either out of the property he possesses, or out of the product of his labor, which is property to him; and is amenable in his own person to every law of the land; so has everyone the same equal right to vote, and no one part of the nation, nor any individual, has a right to dispute the right of

another. The man who should do this ought to forfeit the exercise of his *own* right, for a term of years. This would render the punishment consistent with the crime.

When a qualification to vote is regulated by years, it is placed on the firmest possible ground; because the qualification is such as nothing but dying before the time can take away; and the equality of rights, as a principle, is recognized in the act of regulating the exercise. But when rights are placed upon or made dependent upon property, they are on the most precarious of all tenures. "Riches make themselves wings, and fly away," and the rights fly with them; and thus they become lost to the man when they would be of most value.

It is from a strange mixture of tyranny and cowardice that exclusions have been set up and continued. The boldness to do wrong at first changes afterwards into cowardly craft, and at last into fear. The representatives in England appear now to act as if they were afraid to do right, even in part, lest it should awaken the nation to a sense of all the wrongs it has endured. This case serves to show that the same conduct that best constitutes the safety of an individual, namely, a strict adherence to principle, constitutes also the safety of a government, and that without it safety is but an empty name. When the rich plunder the poor of his rights, it becomes an example to the poor to plunder the rich of his property; for the rights of the one are as much property to him as wealth is property to the other, and the *little all* is as dear as the *much*. It is only by setting out on just principles that men are trained to be just to each other; and it will always be found that, when the rich protect the rights of the poor, the poor will protect the property of the rich. But the guarantee, to be effectual, must be parliamentarily reciprocal.

Exclusions are not only unjust, but they frequently operate as injuriously to the party who monopolizes as to those who are excluded. When men seek to exclude others from participating in the exercise of any right, they should, at least, be assured that they can effectually perform the whole of the business they

undertake; for, unless they do this, themselves will be losers by the monopoly. This has been the case with respect to the monopolized right of election. The monopolizing party has not been able to keep the parliamentary representation, to whom the power of taxation was entrusted, in the state it ought to have been, and have thereby multiplied taxes upon themselves equally with those who were excluded.

A great deal has been and will continue to be said about disqualifications arising from the commission of offenses, but were this subject urged to its full extent, it would disqualify a great number of the present electors, together with their representatives; for, of all offenses, none are more destructive to the morals of society than bribery and corruption. It is, therefore, civility to such persons to pass this subject over, and to give them a fair opportunity of recovering, or rather of creating character.

Everything in the present mode of electioneering in England is the reverse of what it ought to be, and the vulgarity that attends elections is no other than the natural consequence of inverting the order of the system.

In the first place, the candidate seeks the elector, instead of the elector seeking for a representative; and the electors are advertised as being in the interest of the candidate, instead of the candidate being in the interest of the electors. The candidate pays the elector for his vote, instead of the nation paying the representative for his time and attendance on public business. The complaint for an undue election is brought by the candidate, as if he, and not the electors, were the party aggrieved; and he takes on himself, at any period of the election, to break it up by declining, as if the election was in his right and not in theirs.

The compact that was entered into at the last Westminster election between two of the candidates (Mr. Fox and Lord Hood) was an indecent violation of the principles of election. The candidates assumed, in their own persons, the rights of the electors; for it was only in the body of the electors, and not at all in the candidates, that the right of making any such com-

fact, or compromise, could exist. But the principle of election and representation is so completely done away, in every stage thereof, that inconsistency has no longer the power of surprising.

Neither from elections thus conducted, nor from rotten borough addressers, nor from county meetings, promoted by placemen and pensioners, can the sense of the nation be known. It is still corruption appealing to itself. But a convention of a thousand persons, fairly elected, would bring every matter to a decided issue.

As to county meetings, it is only persons of leisure, or those who live near to the place of meeting, that can attend, and the number on such occasions is but like a drop in the bucket compared with the whole. The only consistent service which such meetings could render would be that of apportioning the county into convenient districts, and when this is done each district might, according to its number of inhabitants, elect its quota of county members to the national convention; and the vote of each elector might be taken in the parish where he resided, either by ballot or by voice, as he should choose to give it.

A national convention thus formed would bring together the sense and opinions of every part of the nation, fairly taken. The science of government, and the interest of the public and of the several parts thereof, would then undergo an ample and rational discussion, freed from the language of parliamentary disguise.

But in all deliberations of this kind, though men have a right to reason with and endeavor to convince each other upon any matter that respects their common good, yet, in point of practice, the majority of opinions, when known, forms a rule for the whole, and to this rule every good citizen practically conforms.

Mr. Burke, as if he knew (for every concealed pensioner has the opportunity of knowing) that the abuses acted under the present system are too flagrant to be palliated, and that the majority of opinions, whenever such abuses should be made

public, would be for a general and effectual reform, has endeavored to preclude the event by sturdily denying the right of a majority of a nation to act as a whole. Let us bestow a thought upon this case.

When any matter is proposed as a subject for consultation, it necessarily implies some mode of decision. Common consent, arising from absolute necessity, has placed this in a majority of opinions; because without it there can be no decision, and consequently no order. It is, perhaps, the only case in which mankind, however various in their ideas upon other matters, can consistently be unanimous; because it is a mode of decision derived from the primary original right of every individual concerned; *that* right being first individually exercised in giving an opinion, and whether that opinion shall arrange with the minority or the majority is a subsequent accidental thing that neither increases nor diminishes the individual original right itself. Prior to any debate, inquiry, or investigation, it is not supposed to be known on which side the majority of opinions will fall, and therefore, whilst this mode of decision secures to everyone the right of giving an opinion, it admits to everyone an equal chance in the ultimate event.

Among the matters that will present themselves to the consideration of a national convention there is one wholly of a domestic nature, but so marvelously loaded with confusion as to appear at first sight almost impossible to be reformed. I mean the condition of what is called law.

But, if we examine into the cause from whence this confusion, now so much the subject of universal complaint, is produced, not only the remedy will immediately present itself, but with it the means of preventing the like case hereafter.

In the first place, the confusion has generated itself from the absurdity of every parliament assuming to be eternal in power, and the laws partake in a similar manner of this assumption. They have no period of legal or natural expiration; and, however absurd in principle or inconsistent in practice many of them have become, they still are, if not especially repealed, considered as making a part of the general mass. By this

means the body of what is called law is spread over a space of *several hundred years*, comprehending laws obsolete, laws repugnant; laws ridiculous, and every other kind of laws forgotten or remembered; and what renders the case still worse is that the confusion multiplies with the progress of time.<sup>1</sup>

To bring this misshapen monster into form, and to prevent its lapsing again into a wilderness state, only two things, and those very simple, are necessary.

The first is to review the whole mass of laws and to bring forward such only as are worth retaining, and let all the rest drop; and to give to the laws so brought forward a new era, commencing from the time of such reform.

Secondly, that at the expiration of every twenty-one years (or any other stated period) a like review shall again be taken, and the laws, found proper to be retained, be again carried forward, commencing with that date, and the useless laws dropped and discontinued.

By this means there can be no obsolete laws, and scarcely such a thing as laws standing in direct or equivocal contradiction to each other, and every person will know the period of time to which he is to look back for all the laws in being.

It is worth remarking that while every other branch of science is brought within some commodious system, and the study of it simplified by easy methods, the laws take the contrary course and become every year more complicated, entangled, confused, and obscure.

<sup>1</sup>In the time of Henry IV a law was passed making it felony "to multiply gold or silver, or to make use of the craft of multiplication," and this law remained two hundred and eighty-six years upon the statute books. It was then repealed as being ridiculous and injurious. [Paine's note.]

## LETTER TO GEORGE WASHINGTON

PARIS, July 30, 1796

As censure is but awkwardly softened by apology, I shall offer you no apology for this letter. The eventful crisis to which your double politics have conducted the affairs of your country requires an investigation uncramped by ceremony.

There was a time when the fame of America, moral and political, stood fair and high in the world. The luster of her revolution extended itself to every individual; and to be a citizen of America gave a title to respect in Europe. Neither meanness nor ingratitude had been mingled in the composition of her character. Her resistance to the attempted tyranny of England left her unsuspected of the one, and her open acknowledgment of the aid she received from France precluded all suspicion of the other. The Washington of politics had not then appeared.

At the time I left America (April 1787) the Continental Convention, that formed the federal Constitution was on the point of meeting. Since that time new schemes of politics, and new distinctions of parties, have arisen. The term *Antifederalist* has been applied to all those who combated the defects of that constitution, or opposed the measures of your administration. It was only to the absolute necessity of establishing some federal authority, extending equally over all the states, that an instrument so inconsistent as the present federal Constitution is, obtained a suffrage. I would have voted for it myself had I been in America, or even for a worse, rather than have had none, provided it contained the means of remedying its defects by the same appeal to the people by which it was to be established. It is always better policy to leave removable errors to expose themselves than to hazard too much in contending against them theoretically.

I have introduced these observations not only to mark the general difference between Antifederalist and Anticonstitutionalist, but to preclude the effect, and even the application, of the former of these terms to myself. I declare myself opposed to several matters in the Constitution, particularly to the manner in which what is called the Executive is formed, and to the long duration of the Senate; and if I live to return to America, I will use all my endeavors to have them altered.<sup>1</sup> I also declare myself opposed to almost the whole of your administration; for I know it to have been deceitful, if not perfidious, as I shall show in the course of this letter. But as to the point of consolidating the states into a federal government, it so happens, that the proposition for that purpose came originally from myself. I proposed it in a letter to Chancellor Livingston in the spring of 1782, while that gentleman was minister for foreign affairs. The five per cent duty recommended by Congress had then fallen through, having been adopted by some of the states, altered by others, rejected by Rhode Island, and repealed by Virginia after it had been consented to. The proposal in the letter I allude to was to get over the whole difficulty at once by annexing a continental legislative body to Congress; for in order to have any law of the Union uniform, the case could only be that either Congress, as it then stood, must frame the law and the states severally adopt it without alteration, or the states must erect a continental legislature for the purpose. Chancellor Livingston, Robert Morris, Gouverneur Morris, and myself, had a meeting at the house of Robert Morris on the subject of that letter. There was no diversity of opinion on the proposition for a continental legislature; the only difficulty was on the manner of bringing the proposition forward. For my own part, as I considered

<sup>1</sup>I have always been opposed to the mode of refining government up to an individual, or what is called a single executive. Such a man will always be the chief of a party. A plurality is far better; it combines the mass of a nation better together. And besides this, it is necessary to the manly mind of a republic that it loses the debasing idea of obeying an individual. [Paine's note.]

it as a remedy in reserve that could be applied at any time *when the states saw themselves wrong enough to be put right* (which did not appear to be the case at that time), I did not see the propriety of urging it precipitately, and declined being the publisher of it myself. After this account of a fact, the leaders of your party will scarcely have the hardiness to apply to me the term of Antifederalist. But I can go to a date and to a fact beyond this; for the proposition for electing a continental convention to form the continental government is one of the subjects treated of in the pamphlet *Common Sense*.

Having thus cleared away a little of the rubbish that might otherwise have lain in my way, I return to the point of time at which the present Federal Constitution and your administration began. It was very well said by an anonymous writer in Philadelphia, about a year before that period, that "*thirteen staves and ne'er a hoop will not make a barrel*," and as any kind of hooping the barrel, however defectively executed, would be better than none, it was scarcely possible but that considerable advantages must arise from the federal hooping of the states. It was with pleasure that every sincere friend of America beheld, as the natural effect of union, her rising prosperity; and it was with grief they saw that prosperity mixed, even in the blossom, with the germ of corruption. Monopolies of every kind marked your administration almost in the moment of its commencement. The lands obtained by the revolution were lavished upon partisans; the interest of the disbanded soldier was sold to the speculator; injustice was acted under the pretense of faith; and the chief of the army became the patron of the fraud. From such a beginning what else could be expected than what has happened? A mean and servile submission to the insults of one nation; treachery and ingratitude to another.

Some vices make their approach with such a splendid appearance that we scarcely know to what class of moral distinctions they belong. They are rather virtues corrupted than vices, originally. But meanness and ingratitude have nothing equivocal in their character. There is not a trait in them that renders them doubtful. They are so originally vice that they

are generated in the dung of other vices, and crawl into existence with the filth upon their back. The fugitives have found protection in you, and the levee-room is their place of rendezvous.

As the Federal Constitution is a copy, though not quite so base as the original, of the form of the British government, an imitation of its vices was naturally to be expected. So intimate is the connection between *form* and *practice*, that to adopt the one is to invite the other. Imitation is naturally progressive, and is rapidly so in matters that are vicious.

Soon after the Federal Constitution arrived in England, I received a letter from a female literary correspondent (a native of New York) very well mixed with friendship, sentiment, and politics. In my answer to that letter, I permitted myself to ramble into the wilderness of imagination, and to anticipate what might hereafter be the condition of America. I had no idea that the picture I then drew was realizing so fast, and still less that Mr. Washington was hurrying it on. As the extract I allude to is congenial with the subject I am upon, I here transcribe it:

You touch me on a very tender point when you say that my friends on your side the water cannot be reconciled to the idea of my abandoning America. They are right. I had rather see my horse Button eating the grass of Bordentown or Morrisania than see all the pomp and show of Europe.

A thousand years hence (for I must indulge a few thoughts), perhaps in less, America may be what Europe now is. The innocence of her character, that won the hearts of all nations in her favor, may sound like a romance and her inimitable virtue as if it had never been. The ruin of that liberty which thousands bled for or struggled to obtain may just furnish materials for a village tale or extort a sigh from rustic sensibility, whilst the fashionable of that day, enveloped in dissipation, shall deride the principle and deny the fact.

When we contemplate the fall of empires and the extinction of the nations of the Ancient World, we see but little to excite our regret than the mouldering ruins of pompous palaces, magnificent museums, lofty pyramids and walls and towers of the most costly workmanship; but when the empire of America

shall fall, the subject for contemplative sorrow will be infinitely greater than crumbling brass and marble can inspire. It will not then be said, here stood a temple of vast antiquity; here rose a babel of invisible height; or there a palace of sumptuous extravagance; but here, Ah, painful thought! the noblest work of human wisdom, the grandest scene of human glory, the fair cause of Freedom rose and fell. Read this, and then ask if I forget America.

Impressed, as I was, with apprehensions of this kind, I had America constantly in my mind in all the publications I afterwards made. The First and still more the Second Part of *The Rights of Man* bear evident marks of this watchfulness; and the "Dissertation on First Principles of Government" goes more directly to the point than either of the former. I now pass on to other subjects.

It will be supposed by those into whose hands this letter may fall that I have some personal resentment against you; I will therefore settle this point before I proceed further.

If I have any resentment, you must acknowledge that I have not been hasty in declaring it; neither would it now be declared (for what are private resentments to the public) if the cause of it did not unite itself as well with your public as with your private character, and with the motives of your political conduct.

The part I acted in the American revolution is well known; I shall not here repeat it. I know also that had it not been for the aid received from France, in men, money, and ships, that your cold and unmilitary conduct (as I shall show in the course of this letter) would in all probability have lost America; at least she would not have been the independent nation she now is. You slept away your time in the field till the finances of the country were completely exhausted, and you have but little share in the glory of the final event. It is time, sir, to speak the undisguised language of historical truth.

Elevated to the chair of the Presidency, you assumed the merit of everything to yourself, and the natural ingratitude of your constitution began to appear. You commenced your Presidential career by encouraging and swallowing the grossest adu-

lation, and you travelled America from one end to the other to put yourself in the way of receiving it. You have as many addresses in your chest as James the II. As to what were your views, for if you are not great enough to have ambition you are little enough to have vanity, they cannot be directly inferred from expressions of your own; but the partisans of your politics have divulged the secret.

John Adams has said (and John it is known was always a speller after places and offices, and never thought his little services were highly enough paid)—John has said, that as Mr. Washington had no child, the Presidency should be made hereditary in the family of Lund Washington. John might then have counted upon some sinecure himself, and a provision for his descendants. He did not go so far as to say, also, that the Vice-Presidency should be hereditary in the family of John Adams. He prudently left that to stand on the ground that one good turn deserves another.<sup>1</sup>

John Adams is one of those men who never contemplated the origin of government, or comprehended anything of first principles. If he had, he might have seen that the right to set up and establish hereditary government never did, and never can, exist in any generation at any time whatever; that it is of the nature of treason; because it is an attempt to take away the rights of all the minors living at that time, and of all succeeding generations. It is of a degree beyond common treason. It is a sin against nature. The equal right of every generation is a right fixed in the nature of things. It belongs to the son when of age, as it belonged to the father before him. John Adams would himself deny the right that any former deceased generation could have to decree authoritatively a succession of governors over him or over his children; and yet he assumes the pretended right, treasonable as it is, of acting it himself. His ignorance is his best excuse.

John Jay has said (and this John was always the sycophant

<sup>1</sup>Two persons to whom John Adams said this, told me of it. The secretary of Mr. Jay was present when it was told to me. [Paine's note.]

of everything in power, from Mr. Girard in America to Grenville in England)—John Jay has said that the Senate should have been appointed for life. He would then have been sure of never wanting a lucrative appointment for himself, and have had no fears about impeachment. These are the disguised traitors that call themselves Federalists.<sup>1</sup>

Could I have known to what degree of corruption and perfidy the administrative part of the government of America had descended, I could have been at no loss to have understood the reservedness of Mr. Washington towards me, during my imprisonment in the Luxembourg. There are cases in which silence is a loud language.

I have now done with Mr. Washington on the score of private affairs. It would have been far more agreeable to me had his conduct been such as not to have merited these reproaches. Errors or caprices of the temper can be pardoned and forgotten; but a cold deliberate crime of the heart, such as Mr. Washington is capable of acting, is not to be washed away. I now proceed to other matter.

After Jay's note to Grenville arrived in Paris from America, the character of everything that was to follow might be easily foreseen; and it was upon this anticipation that my letter of February the 22d was founded. The event has proved that I was not mistaken, except that it has been much worse than I expected.

It would naturally occur to Mr. Washington that the secrecies of Jay's mission to England, where there was already an American Minister, could not but create some suspicion in the French government; especially as the conduct of Morris had been notorious, and the intimacy of Mr. Washington with Morris was known.

The character which Mr. Washington has attempted to act in the world is a sort of non-describable, chameleon-colored

<sup>1</sup>If Mr. John Jay desires to know on what authority I say this, I will give that authority publicly when he chooses to call for it. [Paine's note.]

thing, called *prudence*. It is in many cases a substitute for principle, and is so nearly allied to hypocrisy that it easily slides into it. His genius for prudence furnished him in this instance with an expedient that served, as is the natural and general character of all expedients, to diminish the embarrassments of the moment and multiply them afterwards; for he authorized it to be made known to the French government, as a confidential matter (Mr. Washington should recollect that I was a member of the Convention, and had the means of knowing what I here state)—he authorized it, I say, to be announced, and that for the purpose of preventing any uneasiness to France on the score of Mr. Jay's mission to England, that the object of that mission, and of Mr. Jay's authority, was restricted to that of demanding the surrender of the western posts, and indemnification for the cargoes captured in American vessels. Mr. Washington knows that this was untrue; and knowing this, he had good reason to himself for refusing to furnish the House of Representatives with copies of the instructions given to Jay, as he might suspect, among other things, that he should also be called upon for copies of instructions given to other ministers, and that, in the contradiction of instructions, his want of integrity would be detected. Mr. Washington may now, perhaps, learn, when it is too late to be of any use to him, that a man will pass better through the world with a thousand open errors upon his back, than in being detected in *one* sly falsehood. When one is detected, a thousand are suspected.

The first account that arrived in Paris of a treaty being negotiated by Mr. Jay (for nobody suspected any) came in an English newspaper, which announced that a treaty *offensive* and *defensive* had been concluded between the United States of America and England. This was immediately denied by every American in Paris as an impossible thing; and though it was disbelieved by the French, it imprinted a suspicion that some underhand business was going forward.<sup>1</sup> At length the treaty itself arrived, and every well-affected American blushed with shame.

<sup>1</sup>It was the embarrassment into which the affairs and credit of America were thrown at this instant by the report above alluded to,

It is curious to observe how the appearance of characters will change whilst the root that produces them remains the same. The Washington faction having waded through the slough of negotiation, and whilst it amused France with professions of friendship contrived to injure her, immediately throws off the hypocrite, and assumes the swaggering air of a bravado. The party papers of that imbecile administration were on this occasion filled with paragraphs about *Sovereignty*. A poltroon may boast of his sovereign right to let another kick him, and this is the only kind of sovereignty shown in the treaty with England. But those daring paragraphs, as Timothy Pickering well knows, were intended for France; without whose assistance, in men, money, and ships, Mr. Washington would have cut but a poor figure in the American war. But of his military talents I shall speak hereafter.

I mean not to enter into any discussion of any article of Jay's treaty; I shall speak only upon the whole of it. It is attempted to be justified on the ground of its not being a violation of any

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that made it necessary to contradict it, and that by every means arising from opinion or founded upon authority. The Committee of Public Safety, existing at that time, had agreed to the full execution, on their part, of the treaty between America and France, notwithstanding some equivocal conduct on the part of the American government, not very consistent with the good faith of an ally; but they were not in a disposition to be imposed upon by a counter-treaty. That Jay had no instructions beyond the points above stated, or none that could possibly be construed to extend to the length the British treaty goes, was a matter believed in America, in England, and in France; and without going to any other sources it followed naturally from the message of the President to Congress when he nominated Jay upon that mission. The secretary of Mr. Jay came to Paris soon after the treaty with England had been concluded, and brought with him a copy of Mr. Jay's instructions, which he offered to show to me as a *justification of Jay*. I advised him, as a friend, not to show them to anybody, and did not permit him to show them to me. "Who is it," said I to him, "that you intend to implicate as censurable by showing those instructions? Perhaps that implication may fall upon your own government." Though I did not see the instructions, I could not be at a loss to understand that the American administration had been playing a double game. [Paine's note.]

article or articles of the treaty pre-existing with France. But the sovereign right of explanation does not lie with George Washington and his man Timothy; France, on her part, has at least an equal right: and when nations dispute, it is not so much about words as about things.

A man, such as the world calls a sharper, and versed as Jay must be supposed to be in the quibbles of the law, may find a way to enter into engagements and make bargains in such a manner as to cheat some other party, without that party being able, as the phrase is, *to take the law of him*. This often happens in the cabalistical circle of what is called law. But when this is attempted to be acted on the national scale of treaties, it is too despicable to be defended, or to be permitted to exist. Yet this is the trick upon which Jay's treaty is founded, so far as it has relation to the treaty pre-existing with France. It is a counter-treaty to that treaty, and perverts all the great articles of that treaty to the injury of France, and makes them operate as a bounty to England, with whom France is at war.

The Washington administration shows great desire that the treaty between France and the United States be preserved. Nobody can doubt their sincerity upon this matter. There is not a British Minister, a British merchant, or a British agent or sailor in America, that does not anxiously wish the same thing. The treaty with France serves now as a passport to supply England with naval stores and other articles of American produce, whilst the same articles, when coming to France, are made contraband or seizable by Jay's treaty with England. The treaty with France says that neutral ships make neutral property, and thereby gives protection to English property on board American ships; and Jay's treaty delivers up French property on board American ships to be seized by the English. It is too paltry to talk of faith, of national honor, and of the preservation of treaties, whilst such a barefaced treachery as this stares the world in the face.

The Washington administration may save itself the trouble of proving to the French government its *most faithful* intentions of preserving the treaty with France; for France has now

no desire that it should be preserved. She had nominated an envoy extraordinary to America, to make Mr. Washington and his government a present of the treaty, and to have no more to do with *that*, or with *him*. It was at the same time officially declared to the American Minister at Paris *that the French Republic had rather have the American government for an open enemy than a treacherous friend*. This, sir, together with the internal distractions caused in America and the loss of character in the world, is the *eventful crisis*, alluded to in the beginning of this letter, to which your double politics have brought the affairs of your country. It is time that the eyes of America be opened upon you.

How France would have conducted herself towards America and American commerce after all treaty stipulations had ceased, and under the sense of services rendered and injuries received, I know not. It is, however, an unpleasant reflection that in all national quarrels the innocent, and even the friendly part of the community, become involved with the culpable and the unfriendly; and as the accounts that arrived from America continued to manifest an invariable attachment in the general mass of the people to their original ally, in opposition to the new-fangled Washington faction—the resolutions that had been taken in France were suspended. It happened also, fortunately enough, that Gouverneur Morris was not minister at this time.

There is, however, one point that still remains in embryo, and which, among other things, serves to show the ignorance of Washington treaty-makers, and their inattention to pre-existing treaties, when they were employing themselves in framing or ratifying the new treaty with England.

The second article of the treaty of commerce between the United States and France says:

The most christian king and the United States engage mutually, not to grant any particular favor to other nations in respect of commerce and navigation that shall not immediately become common to the other party, who shall enjoy the same favor freely, if the concession was freely made, or on allowing the same compensation if the concession was conditional.

All the concessions, therefore, made to England by Jay's treaty are, through the medium of this second article in the pre-existing treaty, made to France, and become engrafted into the treaty with France, and can be exercised by her as a matter of right, the same as by England.

Jay's treaty makes a concession to England, and that unconditionally, of seizing naval stores in American ships, and condemning them as contraband. It makes also a concession to England to seize provisions and *other articles* in American ships. *Other articles* are *all other articles*, and none but an ignoramus, or something worse, would have put such a phrase into a treaty. The condition annexed in this case is that the provisions and other articles so seized are to be paid for at a price to be agreed upon. Mr. Washington, as President, ratified this treaty after he knew the British Government had recommended an indiscriminate seizure of provisions and all other articles in American ships; and it is now known that those seizures were made to fit out the expedition going to Quiberon Bay, and it was known beforehand that they would be made. The evidence goes also a good way to prove that Jay and Grenville understood each other upon that subject. Mr. Pinckney, when he passed through France on his way to Spain, spoke of the recommencement of the seizures as a thing that would take place. The French government had by some means received information from London to the same purpose, with the addition that the recommencement of the seizures would cause no misunderstanding between the British and American governments. Grenville, in defending himself against the opposition in parliament on account of the scarcity of corn, said (see his speech at the opening of the parliament that met October 29, 1795) that *the supplies for the Quiberon expedition were furnished out of the American ships*, and all the accounts received at that time from England stated that those seizures were made under the treaty. After the supplies for the Quiberon expedition had been procured, and the expected success had failed, the seizures were countermanded; and had the French seized provision vessels going to England, it is probable that the Quiberon expedition could not have been attempted.

In one point of view the treaty with England operates as a loan to the English government. It gives permission to that government to take American property at sea to any amount, and pay for it when it suits her; and besides this, the treaty is in every point of view a surrender of the rights of American commerce and navigation, and a refusal to France of the rights of neutrality. The American flag is not now a neutral flag to France; Jay's treaty of surrender gives a monopoly of it to England.

On the contrary, the treaty of commerce between America and France was formed on the most liberal principles, and calculated to give the greatest encouragement to the infant commerce of America. France was neither a carrier nor an exporter of naval stores or of provisions. Those articles belonged wholly to America, and they had all the protection in that treaty which a treaty could give. But so much has that treaty been perverted that the liberality of it on the part of France has served to encourage Jay to form a counter-treaty with England; for he must have supposed the hands of France tied up by her treaty with America when he was making such large concessions in favor of England. The injury which Mr. Washington's administration has done to the character as well as to the commerce of America is too great to be repaired by him. Foreign nations will be shy of making treaties with a government that has given the faithless example of perverting the liberality of a former treaty to the injury of the party with whom it was made.

In what a fraudulent light must Mr. Washington's character appear in the world when his declarations and his conduct are compared together! Here follows the letter he wrote to the Committee of Public Safety while Jay was negotiating in profound secrecy this treacherous treaty:

George Washington, President of the United States of America, to the Representatives of the French people, members of the Committee of Public Safety of *the French Republic, the great and good friend and ally of the United States.*

On the intimation of the wish of the French Republic that a new Minister should be sent from the United States, I resolved

to manifest my sense of the readiness with which *my* request was fulfilled [that of recalling Genet] by immediately fulfilling the request of your government [that of recalling Morris].

It was some time before a character could be obtained worthy of the high office of expressing the attachment of the United States to the happiness of our allies, *and drawing closer the bonds of our friendship*. I have now made choice of James Monroe, one of our distinguished citizens, to reside near the French Republic, in quality of Minister Plenipotentiary of the United States of America. He is instructed to bear to you our *sincere solicitude for your welfare, and to cultivate with zeal the cordiality so happily subsisting between us*. From a knowledge of his fidelity, probity, and good conduct, I have entire confidence that he will render himself acceptable to you, and give effect to your desire of preserving and *advancing, on all occasions, the interest and connection of the two nations*. I beseech you, therefore, to give full credence to whatever he shall say to you on the part of the United States, and *most of all, when he shall assure you that your prosperity is an object of our affection*. And I pray God to have the French Republic in his holy keeping.

GO WASHINGTON.

Was it by entering into a treaty with England to surrender French property on board American ships to be seized by the English, while English property on board American ships was declared by the French treaty not to be seizable, *that the bonds of friendship between America and France were to be drawn the closer?* Was it by declaring naval stores contraband when coming to France, whilst by the French treaty they were not contraband when going to England, that the *connection between France and America was to be advanced?* Was it by opening the American ports to the British navy in the present war, from which ports the same navy had been expelled by the aid solicited from France in the American war (and that aid gratuitously given) that the gratitude of America was to be shown, and the *solicitude* spoken of in the letter demonstrated?

As the letter was addressed to the Committee of Public Safety, Mr. Washington did not expect it would get abroad in the world, or be seen by any other eye than that of Robespierre,

or be heard by any other ear than that of the Committee; that it would pass as a whisper across the Atlantic, from one dark chamber to the other, and there terminate. It was calculated to remove from the mind of the Committee all suspicion upon Jay's mission to England, and, in this point of view, it was suited to the circumstances of the movement then passing; but as the event of that mission has proved the letter to be hypocritical, it serves no other purpose of the present moment than to show that the writer is not to be credited. Two circumstances serve to make the reading of the letter necessary in the Convention. The one was that they who succeeded on the fall of Robespierre found it most proper to act with publicity; the other, to extinguish the suspicions which the strange conduct of Morris had occasioned in France.

When the British treaty, and the ratification of it by Mr. Washington, was known in France, all further declarations from him of his good disposition as an ally and friend, passed for so many ciphers; but still it appeared necessary to him to keep up the farce of declarations. It is stipulated in the British treaty that commissioners are to report at the end of two years on the case of *neutral ships making neutral property*. In the meantime, neutral ships do *not* make neutral property, according to the British treaty, and they *do*, according to the French treaty. The preservation, therefore, of the French treaty became of great importance to England, as by that means she can employ American ships as carriers, whilst the same advantage is denied to France. Whether the French treaty could exist as a matter of right after this clandestine perversion of it, could not but give some apprehensions to the partisans of the British treaty, and it became necessary to them to make up, by fine words, what was wanting in good actions.

An opportunity offered to that purpose. The Convention, on the public reception of Mr. Monroe, ordered the American flag and the French flags to be displayed unitedly in the hall of the Convention. Mr. Monroe made a present of an American flag for the purpose. The Convention returned this compliment by sending a French flag to America, to be presented by

their minister, Mr. Adet, to the American government. This resolution passed long before Jay's treaty was known or suspected: it passed in the days of confidence; but the flag was not presented by Mr. Adet till several months after the treaty had been ratified. Mr. Washington made this the occasion of saying some fine things to the French minister; and the better to get himself into tune to do this, he began by saying the finest things of himself.

"Born, sir (said he) in a land of liberty; *having* early learned its value; *having* engaged in a perilous conflict to defend it; *having*, in a word, devoted the best years of my life to secure its permanent establishment in my own country; *my* anxious recollections, *my* sympathetic feelings, and *my* best wishes are irresistibly excited, whenever, in any country, I see an oppressed people unfurl the banner of freedom."

Mr. Washington, having expended so many fine phrases upon himself, was obliged to invent a new one for the French, and he calls them "wonderful people!" The coalesced powers acknowledged as much.

It is laughable to hear Mr. Washington talk of his *sympathetic feelings*, who has always been remarked, even among his friends, for not having any. He has, however, given no proofs of any to me. As to the pompous encomiums he so liberally pays to himself on the score of the American revolution, the reality of them may be questioned; and since he has forced them so much into notice, it is fair to examine his pretensions.

A stranger might be led to suppose, from the egotism with which Mr. Washington speaks, that himself only had generated, conducted, completed, and established the revolution; in fine, that it was all his own doing.

In the first place, as to the political part, he had no share in it; and, therefore, the whole of *that* is out of the question with respect to him. There remains, then, only the military part; and it would have been prudent in Mr. Washington not to have awakened inquiry upon that subject. Fame then was cheap; he enjoyed it cheaply; and nobody was disposed to take away

the laurels that, whether they were *acquired* or not, had been *given*.

Mr. Washington's merit consisted in constancy. But constancy was the common virtue of the revolution. Who was there that was inconstant? I know but of one military defection, that of Arnold; and I know of no political defection, among those who made themselves eminent when the revolution was formed by the declaration of independence. Even Silas Deane, though he attempted to defraud, did not betray.

But when we speak of military character, something more is to be understood than constancy; and something more *ought* to be understood than the Fabian system of *doing nothing*. The *nothing* part can be done by anybody. Old Mrs. Thompson, the housekeeper of headquarters (who threatened to make the sun and the *wind* shine through Rivington of New York), could have done it as well as Mr. Washington. Deborah would have been as good as Barak.

Mr. Washington had the nominal rank of Commander in Chief, but he was not so in fact. He had, in reality, only a separate command. He had no control over, or direction of, the army to the northward under Gates that captured Burgoyne; nor of that to the south under [Nathanael] Greene, that recovered the southern states.<sup>1</sup> The nominal rank, however, of Commander in Chief, served to throw upon him the luster of those actions, and to make him appear as the soul and center of all military operations in America.

He commenced his command June, 1775, during the time the Massachusetts army lay before Boston, and after the affair of Bunker Hill. The commencement of his command was the commencement of inactivity. Nothing was afterwards done, or attempted to be done, during the nine months he remained before Boston. If we may judge from the resistance made at Concord, and afterwards at Bunker Hill, there was a spirit of enterprise at that time, which the presence of Mr. Washington chilled into cold defense. By the advantage of a good exterior

<sup>1</sup> See Mr. Winterbotham's valuable *History of America*, lately published. [Paine's note.]

he attracts respect, which his habitual silence tends to preserve; but he has not the talent of inspiring ardor in an army. The enemy removed from Boston in March, 1776, to wait for reinforcements from Europe, and to take a more advantageous position at New York.

The inactivity of the campaign of 1775 on the part of General Washington, when the enemy had a less force than in any other future period of the war, and the injudicious choice of positions taken by him in the campaign of 1776, when the enemy had its greatest force, necessarily produced the losses and misfortunes that marked that gloomy campaign. The positions taken were either islands or necks of land. In the former, the enemy, by the aid of their ships, could bring their whole force against a part of General Washington's, as in the affair of Long Island; and in the latter, he might be shut up as in the bottom of a bag. This had nearly been the case at New York, and it was so in part; it was actually the case at Fort Washington; and it would have been the case at Fort Lee, if General Greene had not moved precipitately off, leaving everything behind, and by gaining Hackensack bridge got out of the bag of Bergen Neck. How far Mr. Washington, as General, is blamable for these matters, I am not undertaking to determine; but they are evidently defects in military geography. The successful skirmishes at the close of that campaign (matters that would scarcely be noticed in a better state of things) make the brilliant exploits of General Washington's seven campaigns. No wonder we see so much pusillanimity in the *President*, when we see so little enterprise in the *General*!

The campaign of 1777 became famous, not by anything on the part of General Washington, but by the capture of General Burgoyne and the army under his command by the Northern army at Saratoga under General Gates. So totally distinct and unconnected were the two armies of Washington and Gates, and so independent was the latter of the authority of the nominal Commander in Chief, that the two generals did not so much as correspond, and it was only by a letter of General (since Governor) Clinton that General Washington was informed of that

event. The British took possession of Philadelphia this year, which they evacuated the next, just time enough to save their heavy baggage and fleet of transports from capture by the French Admiral d'Estaing, who arrived at the mouth of the Delaware soon after.

The capture of Burgoyne gave an éclat in Europe to the American arms, and facilitated the alliance with France. The éclat, however, was not kept up by anything on the part of General Washington. The same unfortunate languor that marked his entrance into the field continued always. Discontent began to prevail strongly against him, and a party was formed in Congress, whilst sitting at Yorktown, in Pennsylvania, for removing him from the command of the army. The hope, however, of better times, the news of the alliance with France, and the unwillingness of showing discontent, dissipated the matter.

Nothing was done in the campaigns of 1778, 1779, 1780, in the part where General Washington commanded, except the taking of Stony Point by General Wayne. The Southern States in the meantime were overrun by the enemy. They were afterwards recovered by General Greene, who had in a very great measure created the army that accomplished that recovery. In all this General Washington had no share. The Fabian system of war, followed by him, began now to unfold itself with all its evils; but what is Fabian war without Fabian means to support it? The finances of Congress, depending wholly on emissions of paper money, were exhausted. Its credit was gone. The continental treasury was not able to pay the expense of a brigade of wagons to transport the necessary stores to the army, and yet the sole object, the establishment of the revolution, was a thing of remote distance. The time I am now speaking of is in the latter end of the year 1780.

In this situation of things it was found not only expedient, but absolutely necessary, for Congress to state the whole case to its ally. I knew more of this matter (before it came into Congress or was known to General Washington) of its progress, and its issue, than I choose to state in this letter. Colonel

John Laurens was sent to France as an Envoy Extraordinary on this occasion, and by a private agreement between him and me I accompanied him. We sailed from Boston in the *Alliance* frigate, February 11th, 1781. France had already done much in accepting and paying bills drawn by Congress. She was now called upon to do more. The event of Colonel Laurens's mission, with the aid of the venerable Minister, Franklin, was that France gave in money, as a present, six millions of livres, and ten millions more as a loan, and agreed to send a fleet of not less than thirty sail of the line, at her own expense, as an aid to America. Colonel Laurens and myself returned from Brest the 1st of June following, taking with us two millions and a half of livres (upwards of one hundred thousand pounds sterling) of the money given, and convoying two ships with stores.

We arrived at Boston the 25th of August following. De Grasse arrived with the French fleet in the Chesapeake at the same time, and was afterwards joined by that of Barras, making 31 sail of the line. The money was transported in wagons from Boston to the Bank at Philadelphia, of which Mr. Thomas Willing, who has since put himself at the head of the list of petitioners in favor of the British treaty, was then President. And it was by the aid of this money, and this fleet, and of Rochambeau's army, that Cornwallis was taken; the laurels of which have been unjustly given to Mr. Washington. His merit in that affair was no more than that of any other American officer.

I have had and still have as much pride in the American revolution as any man, or as Mr. Washington has a right to have; but that pride has never made me forgetful whence the great aid came that completed the business. Foreign aid (that of France) was calculated upon at the commencement of the revolution. It is one of the subjects treated of in the pamphlet *Common Sense*, but as a matter that could not be hoped for, unless independence was declared. The aid, however, was greater than could have been expected.

It is as well the ingratitude as the pusillanimity of Mr. Washington, and the Washington faction, that has brought upon

America the loss of character she now suffers in the world, and the numerous evils her commerce has undergone, and to which it is yet exposed. The British ministry soon found out what sort of men they had to deal with, and they dealt with them accordingly; and if further explanation was wanting, it has been fully given since, in the snivelling address of the New York Chamber of Commerce to the President, and in that of sundry merchants of Philadelphia, which was not much better.

When the revolution of America was finally established by the termination of the war, the world gave her credit for great character; and she had nothing to do but to stand firm upon that ground. The British ministry had their hands too full of trouble to have provoked a rupture with her, had she shown a proper resolution to defend her rights. But encouraged as they were by the submissive character of the American administration, they proceeded from insult to insult, till none more were left to be offered. The proposals made by Sweden and Denmark to the American administration were disregarded. I know not if so much as an answer has been returned to them. The minister *penitentiary* (as some of the British prints called him), Mr. Jay, was sent on a pilgrimage to London to make up all by penance and petition. In the meantime the lengthy and drowsy writer of the pieces signed *Camillus* held himself in reserve to vindicate everything; and to sound in America the tocsin of terror upon the inexhaustible resources of England. Her resources, says he, are greater than those of all the other powers. This man is so intoxicated with fear and finance, that he knows not the difference between *plus* and *minus*—between a hundred pounds in hand, and a hundred pounds worse than nothing.

The commerce of America, so far as it had been established by all the treaties that had been formed prior to that by Jay, was free, and the principles upon which it was established were good. That ground ought never to have been departed from. It was the justifiable ground of right, and no temporary difficulties ought to have induced an abandonment of it. The case is now otherwise. The ground, the scene, the pretensions, the

everything, are changed. The commerce of America is, by Jay's treaty, put under foreign dominion. The sea is not free for her. Her right to navigate it is reduced to the right of escaping; that is, until some ship of England or France stops her vessels and carries them into port. Every article of American produce, whether from the sea or the land, fish, flesh, vegetable, or manufacture, is, by Jay's treaty, made either contraband or seizable. Nothing is exempt. In all other treaties of commerce, the article which enumerates the contraband articles, such as firearms, gunpowder, &c., is followed by another article which enumerates the articles not contraband: but it is not so in Jay's treaty. There is no exempting article. Its place is supplied by the article for seizing and carrying into port; and the sweeping phrase of "provisions and *other articles*" includes everything. There never was such a base and servile treaty of surrender since treaties began to exist.

This is the ground upon which America now stands. All her rights of commerce and navigation are to begin anew, and that with loss of character to begin with. If there is sense enough left in the heart to call a blush into the cheek, the Washington administration must be ashamed to appear.—And as to you, Sir, treacherous in private friendship (for so you have been to me, and that in the day of danger) and a hypocrite in public life, the world will be puzzled to decide whether you are an apostate or an impostor; whether you have abandoned good principles, or whether you ever had any.

THOMAS PAINE.

## NOTES

COMMON SENSE (pp. 3-44)

The year after the appearance of *Common Sense*, Paine gave the following account of its genesis: "In October, 1775, Dr. Franklin proposed giving me such materials as were in his hands towards completing a history of the present transactions, and seemed desirous of having the first volume out the next spring. I had then formed the outlines of *Common Sense*, and had nearly finished the first part ('On the Origin and Design of Government in General, with Concise Remarks on the English Constitution'); and as I supposed the doctor's design in getting out a history was to open the new year with a new system, I expected to surprise him with a production on that subject much earlier than he thought of; and without informing him of what I was doing, got it ready for the press as fast as I conveniently could, and sent him the first pamphlet that was printed off" (January 9, 1776. Quoted in Conway, *Life*, I, 67). It will be noted that while Paine did not inform Franklin of his plan to urge independence, Franklin had given him "materials" and he suspected Franklin's "design" to open a "new system." We know that Franklin, who sponsored Paine's coming to America, considered Paine "his adopted political Son" (Conway, *Life*, II, 468), that Paine was eager to please him, and that Franklin had for some time been a "dominion home-ruler" and in 1774 had said, on his dismissal from his crown office, "It seems I am too much of an American." (For full analysis see Verner Crane, *Benjamin Franklin, Englishman and American*, Baltimore, 1936.) Therefore Franklin may not have been completely uninfluential on *Common Sense*, even if he did not read the actual manuscript; the fact that it embodied ideas he was known to favor is borne out by the popular ascription of the work to Franklin. (See Jefferson's *Writings*, Monticello Edition, XV, 305.) Paine did, however, take two other fellow members of the American Philosophical Society into his confidence—Dr. Benjamin Rush and David Rittenhouse. Paine and Rush met at Aitken's bookstore, at what is now 110 Market Street, where the former worked. Rush had been pleased with Paine's antislavery article, "Justice and Humanity," in 1774, invited Paine to his house, and suggested that he write the appeal for complete independence. Rush says that Paine read to him "every chapter of the proposed pamphlet as he composed it," and that it was he, Rush, who gave the work its title and succeeded in finding a publisher, Robert Bell, sufficiently audacious to bring the work out. (See Rush's *Memorial*, ed. Biddle, 1905, pp. 82-85; N. G. Goodman,

Rush, 1934, pp. 48-52.) Paine himself tells us (*Writings*, ed. Conway, I, 135) that Rittenhouse, "a gentleman of known *Independent Principles*," was "one of the very few to whom the author of *Common Sense* showed some part [thereof] while in manuscript." (On Rittenhouse's deriving republicanism from astronomy, and his strong Newtonianism, see his *Memoirs* by William Barton, Philadelphia, 1813, pp. 499-502, 512, 515, 531-534.) John Adams (*Works*, II, 507) considered the third part of *Common Sense* written from "a mere desire to please the democratic party, in Philadelphia, at whose head were Mr. [Timothy] Matlack, Mr. [James] Cannon, and Dr. [Thomas] Young," with whom we know he was intimate. (See Christopher Marshall's *Diary*, Philadelphia, 1839, pp. 64, 70, 72, 73, 76, 79, 80.) Young was also a religious radical who probably wrote most of the deistic *Reason the Only Oracle* (1784) published after his death by Ethan Allen. Finally, Paine's references in *Common Sense* to authors may suggest possible influences: Thomson and his humanitarianism; Milton and hatred of monarchy; James Burgh, whose *Political Disquisitions* provided him with an anthology of the basic thoughts of political thinkers from the Greeks to Paine's day; and Dragonetti and his ideal of "the greatest sum of individual happiness with the least national expense," embodied in *Virtues and Rewards*. In *The Forester's Letters*, the sequel to *Common Sense*, he shows acquaintance with Rousseau's "proposed . . . plan for establishing a perpetual European peace" (*Writings*, I, 150).

Let us now consider the arguments of *Common Sense* in relation to historical events. Many books on Paine give the impression that all was quiet in the colonies, that there had been no whisper of independence, and that by virtue of this completely unexpected bombshell he started, single-handed, the War for Independence. Such a view would seem to disregard the strong preparation in the Stamp Act controversy and James Otis's *A Vindication* as early as 1762. "Look into Mister Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*, *Crisis*, and *Rights of Man*," exclaimed John Adams, with some exaggeration. "What can you find that is not to be found, in solid substance, in this *Vindication* . . .?" (Adams's *Works*, X, 310.) For a mass of references on "The Sentiment of Independence, its Growth and Consummation," see the chapter (III) by that title, written by G. E. Ellis, in *A Narrative and Critical History of America*, edited by Justin Winsor, Boston, 1888, VI, 231-274. He shows, for example, that John Adams, with whom Paine was at this time friendly, had been "outspoken in his advocacy of independence for more than a year before R. H. Lee introduced his resolution into Congress." Ellis says, "Adams had avowed it in letters, which the British intercepted in July, 1775, and printed in a Boston newspaper." Indeed, Adams himself, who

nominated Paine as Secretary of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, said that "Dr. Rush . . . furnished him [Paine] with the arguments which had been urged in Congress a hundred times," and he calls *Common Sense* "a tolerable summary of the arguments which I had been repeating again and again in Congress for nine months" (Adams's *Works*, II, 507-09). Paine himself spoke of R. H. Lee, who finally introduced the motion for independence, as an acquaintance "whose fidelity and personal qualities I have been well-acquainted with for three years past" (*Writings*, I, 403, 404, 432). Even while waiting to sail to America, Paine in all probability must have seen John Cartwright's "American Independence the Interest and Glory of Great Britain," which appeared in Woodfall's *Public Advertiser* (London) for March 30, April 4, 18, 22, 25, May 2, 9, 16, 23, June 6, 1774; it was reprinted in the *London Chronicle* for October 25, 1774, and in the *Pennsylvania Journal*.

Now let us remind ourselves of the actual events going on just prior to Paine's sitting down to write and publish *Common Sense*. The battle of Lexington had been fought April 19, 1775. On May 10 the Second Continental Congress met at Philadelphia. The Mecklenburg Resolves were adopted in May. On June 15 Washington was appointed commander-in-chief of the army. On August 23, England issued the proclamation of rebellion. Other events of ominous import: battle of Bunker Hill, June 16, 1775; followed by the American capture of Fort Ticonderoga; Bristol (Rhode Island) bombarded, October 8; Cape Ann (Massachusetts) evacuated in November; flight of Lord Campbell, Governor of South Carolina, October 9; British burn Falmouth, October 18; Lord Dunmore's proclamation declaring slaves free who would attack their masters, November 7; in South Carolina Governor Gadsden gathered together 2000 paid soldiers, November 9; British attack Lechmere's Point, November 10; British use sacred Old South Church as horse stable, beginning November 13; "A Freeman" printed an article in *New England Chronicle*, November 10, urging people "to break off all kind of connection with Britain, and form a Grand Republic of the American United Colonies . . . The further we enter into the field of independence, our prospects will expand and brighten"; Rivington's (Tory) press destroyed, November 29; the Battle of the Great Bridge, December 9; Howe ordered destruction of the Old North Church (Boston) and a hundred houses to be used for firewood, January 6; Americans unsuccessfully attacked Quebec, General Montgomery killed and Arnold wounded, December 31; British burn Norfolk, January 2. (Summarized from Frank Moore's *Diary of the American Revolution, from Newspapers and Original Documents*, New York, 1860, I, 63-194.)

*Common Sense* did not come out until *after* all these events, January 10. Indeed, Paine himself testifies that when he "happened to come to America (November 30, 1774) a few months before the breaking out of hostilities," he "found the disposition of the people such, that they might have been led by a thread and governed by a reed." (*Writings*, I, 275; also 208 ff.) In *Crisis*, III, 1777, he concludes, "The principal arguments in support of independence may be comprehended under the four following heads: 1st, The natural right of the continent to independence; 2d, Her interest in being independent; 3d, The necessity;—and 4th, The moral advantages arising therefrom."

*Common Sense* may well be contrasted, in its constructive proposals, with John Adams's pamphlet, *Thoughts on Government*, January, 1776 (reprinted in his *Works*, IV, 193-200). Like Paine, he urges a republic, an "empire of laws" and not of men, but he attacks Paine's plan of a single house "without any restraints or even any attempt at any equilibrium or counterpoise" (*Ibid.*, II, 508). Such a single assembly would be, he says, merely "vices, follies, and frailties" of the individual writ large; and it "ought to be corrected and defects supplied by some controlling power" which is to be found, he thinks, in two legislative houses and in the judicial power "distinct from both the legislative and executive, and independent upon both, that so it may be a check upon both, as both should be checks upon that." Government, he thought, was like a stool: it needed not one, or two, but *three* legs if it were to stand up. This doctrine of checks and balances embodied in a tripartite division of government he elaborated in his *Defense of the Constitutions*, 1787, which had an important influence upon the makers of the federal constitution. However, if he thought Paine weak at construction, he thought him strong in destruction, and he said he "liked very well" Paine's "arguments in favor of independence"—perhaps because he regarded them as his own.

From the point of view of absolute logic and philosophic integration it is easy to show that *Common Sense* is inconsistent and at times even self-contradictory. A belief in self-interest, for example, logically leads to a belief in the need for bicameralism, but Paine here favors unicameralism and opposes checks and balances. When it is remembered, however, that Paine was writing, not as a political scientist, but as a great publicist persuading and cajoling every segment of the American people to take fateful action against Great Britain, his pamphlet may be understood in its true character: it is a magnificent effort of successful propaganda. If, as John Adams thought, it was difficult to get the thirteen clocks to striking together, it was harder yet to appeal in one pamphlet to all the disparate ele-

ments and interests in the colonies. Yet to succeed, Paine had to drive home his point with the representatives of all the principal and influential groups. To do this he aimed ten appeals to the main concerns of ten sections of the populace. The differences and cross-purposes of these groups explain the apparent contradictoriness of the appeals.

(1) Paine first appealed to the resentment caused by British atrocities as a means of counteracting current appeals (especially of Quaker pacifists) for reconciliation with Britain as the fond mother country. Burning of towns, slaughter of citizens, inciting Indian wars and attempts to start slave rebellions were all used to embarrass and confound those who insisted that England was the loving parent country and to turn the humanitarian sympathies of the Quakers against their pacifism.

(2) He appealed to "feelings" of pity for the oppressed and he raised a higher issue than mere politics, the concept of a great, pure America rising in holy wrath against its ravagers and moving on to its destiny as the home of social justice, and the refuge of the oppressed from foreign lands.

(3) He appealed to the merchants and all who hated war with the assertion that by independence America could stay out of the constant European conflicts into which America would be drawn by her connection with Britain.

(4) He appealed to German and Scotch-Irish immigrants by denying that England was truly the mother country and holding out a new and broader concept with which we have become familiar in the term "the melting-pot."

(5) He appealed to the economic self-interests of the farmer as well as the merchant by citing the need of an expanding America to trade in *all* the markets of Europe, not just in England, and added to that a vivid picture contrasting the profit and felicity of world trade by an independent America with ruin and desolation sure to be visited upon a conquered province by victorious Britons, thus striking again at the advocates of reconciliation.

(6) This appeal to self-interest was followed logically by an appeal through the Bible to the Calvinistic Scotch-Irish and New Englanders with their belief in depravity and the authority of the Scriptures. Here Paine argues from the early prophet Samuel that monarchy is frowned upon by God and that "original sin and hereditary succession are parallels," and suggested echoes of the lost Cromwellian commonwealth as a better type of government.

(7) This scriptural argument cut both ways in an ingenious fashion, for there were—in its assertion that kings were contrary to nature and that men were meant to be simple, self-reliant, and equal—strong appeals to the rising frontier spirit.

(8) The politically constructive part of the pamphlet was peculiarly intended to gain the favor of the radicals who were soon to draw up the very democratic Pennsylvania Constitution of 1776. It opposed checks and balances, and the theories of the proponents of proprietary government.

(9) Paine argued that if we cut loose from Britain, then France will aid us (as she did), and — in an appendix — he argued that we could finance the war by the sale of western lands.

(10) Finally, Paine appealed strongly to American pride and sense of self-sufficiency. He foresees a great future for the country, lauds its ability to produce an army and navy equal to any demands, and claims that only the interference of Great Britain has forestalled unprecedented progress.

Probably the most important attack on *Common Sense* was contained in some letters signed "Cato" by the Rev. Dr. William Smith, Provost of the College of Philadelphia and a Scotch clergyman of the Church of England, who served as spokesmen for wealth and aristocracy. These letters, at least seven of them, were first printed in the *Philadelphia Gazette* beginning in April, 1776. Paine's four letters in reply, called by Conway (who reprinted them in his edition, I, 127-160) *The Forester's Letters*, first appeared in the *Pennsylvania Journal* for April 3, 10, 24, and May 8, 1776. They constitute an important expansion and elaboration of the arguments of *Common Sense*. Being widely copied in current newspapers, they greatly increased Paine's influence in those momentous days when public opinion was to crystallize in the Declaration of Independence, July 4. As in *Common Sense*, he does not accept natural altruism. Hypocrisy, he says, never will be "banished from the earth" (*Writings*, I, 134). But he does make the appeal to nature the basis of his republicanism (*ibid.*, 149, 151, 155) and he says (p. 159) "the safest asylum . . . is the love of the people. All property is safe under their protection . . . An avaricious mob was never heard of." Another elaborate attack on *Common Sense* was the thirty-seven-page pamphlet entitled *Plain Truth: Addressed to the Inhabitants of America, containing Remarks on a Late Pamphlet, intitled "Common Sense."* There were of course many others.

#### THE CRISIS (pp. 45-53)

*The Crisis* papers were issued in thirteen numbered pamphlets with three additional numbers between 1776 and 1783. Each one was signed simply "Common Sense." They were printed on various kinds and scraps of paper and were widely distributed. Every critical point in the Revolution was cause for the issuance of a new *Crisis*.

Thus they represent Paine's most journalistic writing, and, even more than any of his other works, are intimately connected with the day-by-day procession of events. A summary of the events and the subject matter of each pamphlet follows:

*Crisis I.* In 1776 Washington was attempting to hold New York against the vastly superior forces of Howe. In August the Americans were badly beaten in the battle of Long Island, the first real test of strength in the war; the disorderly army retreated across New Jersey in November and December toward Philadelphia. The capital city itself was in great confusion and fear. Congress fled to Baltimore, and the American cause looked very dark. Paine, who had been aide-de-camp to General Greene, rushed to Philadelphia, and, in the midst of the confusion, brought out his *Crisis I*, December 19, 1776, in the *Pennsylvania Journal*, although at the end he dated it December 23. It began with the ringing cry, "These are the times that try men's souls" (see text, p. 45). Washington caused the pamphlet to be read aloud to every corporal's guard in the army. A few nights after, the army re-crossed the Delaware and won the great victory at Trenton, which enabled the Americans to winter peacefully at Morristown, New Jersey.

Space does not permit the reprinting of all sixteen of the *Crisis* series in this volume, but the reader can see their main trend in relation to current events by the following summary:

*Crisis II.* Paine addressed this number "To Lord Howe," January 13, 1777. Howe had been a friend of Franklin in London, and the English thought he would find favor enough in America to negotiate a peace. In June and November, 1776, Howe had issued proclamations to this end. In this number Paine attacks Howe and his American Tory sympathizers, including the Quakers who refused to bear arms for the new nation. What is material prosperity, he cried to Howe and his American loyalists, compared "to the inestimable blessings of 'Liberty and Safety'!" "The meanest peasant in America, blessed with these sentiments, is a happy man compared with a New-York tory." In defense of himself, Paine says his over-warm feelings spring "from a fixed, immovable hatred I have, and ever had, to cruel men and cruel measures." And to Howe's overtures for peace he replies: "Our independence with God's blessing we will maintain against all the world." For orientation, see C. H. Van Tyne's *Loyalists in the American Revolution* (New York: 1902) and his other books on the Revolution.

*Crisis III.* Paine was appointed secretary to the Committee on Foreign Affairs on April 17, 1777. Two days later, on the second anniversary of the battle of Lexington, he issued *Crisis III* in which

ressed to the Commission. "What sort of men or Christians must you suppose Americans to be, . . . who, after soliciting friendship, and entering into alliances with other nations, should at last break through all these obligations, civil and divine, by complying with your horrid and infernal proposal?" The French Alliance, in contrast, is "open, noble, and generous." After a few futile efforts the Commission returned to England, and therefore Paine, November 21, addressed *Crisis VII*, November 21, to "The People of England." English politics, he says, "instead of civilizing, has tended to brutalize mankind." He appealed to the English commercial class—war can never be to "the interest of a trading nation." He also urged the English people to look to the cause of their high taxes, and asks several questions in regard to the legitimacy of the English government (see *Writings*, I, 286), which point forward to his later attack in *Rights of Man*. For orientation, see E. S. Corwin, *French Policy and the American Alliance of 1778* (Princeton, 1916), emphasizing French self-interest and hostility toward Britain; and see, also, S. F. Bemis, "British Secret Service and the French American Alliance," *American Historical Review*, XXIX, 474-495 (April 1924).

*Crisis VIII*. There is now a break of a year and a half in the *Crisis* series. The war was largely inactive in 1779. Paine himself became involved in the Deane affair and was dismissed from his post as secretary in January, 1779. He was much embittered by this incident, and he seemed to associate more with the democratic faction which he had helped in establishing the Pennsylvania Constitution of 1776. He was elected clerk of the Pennsylvania Assembly by the faction which had won over Robert Morris and Dr. Rush. The outcome of the Revolution was still very dark, and in March, 1780, Paine resumed his series with *Crisis VIII*, "Addressed to the People of England." He re-emphasized England's "legacy of debts" which are steadily accruing, and the fact that "America is beyond the reach of conquest."

*Crisis IX*. On May 28, 1780, Paine, as clerk, read Washington's despairing letter for support to the Pennsylvania Assembly. In this crisis Paine now reconciled himself to his former opponents, Morris and Rush, and with the aid of several wealthy merchants in Philadelphia helped form what became the Bank of North America to finance the needed supplies. (See W. G. Sumner, *Robert Morris; Financier*.) In *Crisis IX*, June 9, 1780, Paine hails the danger as averted. He makes the very conservative statement that England must now realize the war is hopeless, for the formation of the bank must "convince her that the cause of America stands not on the will of a few but on the broad foundation of property and popularity." On June 4, 1780, Paine wrote Joseph Reed, president of the Pennsyl-

vania Council, that "unless the wealthier part throw in their aid, public measures must go heavily," and urging him to appeal for aid to "some of the richer inhabitants of the City," urging them "to deposit their plate to be coined for the pay of the Army." To give the cause popularity, he thought they "must begin with men of property." (Quoted, Conway's *Life*, I, 158-159.)

*Crisis Extraordinary.* In spite of Paine's boast, the American cause was still wavering. Rochambeau arrived in July, 1780, but did not dare attack the British Clinton in New York. Gates was defeated at Camden in August, but the Americans won at King's Mountain. Arnold's treason came in September, and Paine issued his most important *Crisis Extraordinary*, October 6, 1780, "On the Subject of Taxation." He appeals for support of the Revolution "on the simple ground of interest." He compares the English system of taxation to the American and finds that we can defend "the country for one third less than what our burden would be if it was conquered, and support the governments afterwards for one eighth of what Britain would levy on us." He goes on to show how an efficient state and federal tax system could easily support the war, and concludes with urging support for the new measure of Congress, funding the currency, on the basis of good business—"Support that measure, and it will support you." This is a good illustration of Paine's practical economic appeal to self-interest during his early period.

*Crisis X.* At this point another break of a year and a half occurs in the *Crisis* series. Paine went with Laurens to France in February, and returned with more financial aid in August, 1781. Cornwallis surrendered in October. The war was practically over in America, but George III made a bellicose speech at the opening of Parliament on November 27, 1781, and Parliament voted to continue the war. In *Crisis X*, March 5, 1782, Paine replied to the King's speech, which, he says, shows how easy "it is to abuse truth and language" from "habitual wickedness." But Paine warns America not to "wrap herself up in delusive hope and suppose the business done." This would "only serve to prolong the war, and increase expenses."

*Crisis XI.* Circumstances proved that Paine's warning was timely. In May, 1782, the North ministry resigned. The new Whig ministry under Rockingham was pledged to a truce with America, and there existed the possibility of playing America off against France through a separate peace. Paine hastened forward with *Crisis XI*, May 22, 1782. "I do not address this publication so much to the people of America as to the British Ministry." "All the world are moved by interest," and therefore it is futile for England to seek a separate peace when all "our public affairs have flourished under the alliance."

He says his argument here is a continuation of his argument against reconciliation in No. VIII.

*Crisis XII.* Between Nos. XI and XII Paine addressed, on May 31, 1782, *A Supernumerary Crisis* to Sir Guy Carleton who had succeeded Clinton at New York. Paine's letter is a personal appeal to save the life of a young British officer who was in danger of being hung by the Americans in retaliation for a crime of which he was not guilty (*Writings*, I, 355-9). On October 29, 1782, Paine resumed the regular series with *Crisis XII*. In September news came that Rockingham had died, and that the new Shelburne ministry was averse to granting independence, hoping that the two countries could yet be united. Paine addressed his new *Crisis* to Lord Shelburne, with the purpose of disillusioning him from his "rhapsody of inconsistency." America cannot go back after being subjected for so long to "British brutality." And in brief, "As America is gone, the only act of manhood is to let her go."

*Crisis XIII.* On April 16, 1783, news came of peace and independence. And on April 19, eight years after the battle of Lexington, Paine issued his last regular *Crisis*, beginning with the words, "The times that tried men's souls, are over—and the greatest and completest revolution the world ever knew, gloriously and happily accomplished." But even here Paine was looking to the future by urging a stronger union. The "great hinge" on which the fate of the Revolution turned was "the *Union of the States*." And unless we are unwise, we must "be strongly impressed with the advantage, as well as the necessity of strengthening that happy union which has been our salvation." (See *Public Good*, p. 354, and note on same, p. 431.)

Paine, however, was not quite through with the *Crisis* series. On December 9, 1783, he addressed his *A Supernumerary Crisis* "To the People of America." In 1782 Rhode Island threw the finances of the federal government out of balance by refusing to ratify a five per cent impost. Paine had addressed six letters to the State on the subject. In this, his last *Crisis*, he continued his criticism of Rhode Island. He argues that Britain is using the disunited state of America to gain a monopoly over her commerce. And he concludes the *Crisis* series, urging a stronger union. It is "only by acting in union, that the usurpations of foreign nations on the freedom of trade can be counteracted, and security extended to the commerce of America."

*The Crisis* as a whole undoubtedly from time to time exerted considerable influence in favor of the American cause. Washington said that Paine had been "of considerable utility to the common cause by several of his publications" and on February 10, 1782, with

Robert Morris and Robert Livingston, he secured from Congress a salary of \$800 a year to enable Paine to continue "informing the people and rousing them to action" (Conway, *Life*, I, 182, 199).

For an understanding of Paine himself, however, *The Crisis* is of great importance in the growth of his ideas. There seem to be four main trends of thought in the papers. First, the papers are a continuation of *Common Sense* by their insistence on absolute independence as from month to month during the war various schemes arose for reconciliation. Second, in his attack on the English system of government and especially in his appeal to the English people to examine the legitimacy of the monarchy, Paine is expressing ideas that were to be fully expressed in *Rights of Man*. This attack reaches a culmination in *Crisis VII*. Third, after he became embittered at Congress over the Deane affair and after taking the side of the democrats in the Pennsylvania constitutional squabble, Paine seems to have come to the conclusion, especially after receiving Washington's despairing letter, that the war could only be won by the support of the wealthy. His experiences with the debtor-democratic classes in Pennsylvania probably proved to him how impossible it would be to win a war with their resources alone. At any rate it is immediately after this that Paine with Robert Morris formed the Bank of North America and became quite conservative in his view. (See my introduction to *Six New Letters of Thomas Paine*, "Thomas Paine the Conservative.") This line of thought is brought out in Nos. VII and IX where he says the cause of America rests on "the broad foundation of property and popularity," and especially in *Crisis Extraordinary* where it rests on "the simple ground of interest." Finally, the last two numbers, XII and XIII, show the growth of his sentiment in favor of the union (as opposed to states' rights) which first found expression in *Public Good* in December, 1780.

For orientation in relation to other current propaganda, see P. Davidson, *Propaganda and the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill, 1941); see also Allan Nevins, *The American States During and After the Revolution, 1775-1789* (New York, 1927), one of the most comprehensive treatments of the subject.

#### THE RIGHTS OF MAN (pp. 54-233)

In 1787 Paine left for England with the avowed purpose of getting his iron bridge accepted abroad. He expected to remain abroad no more than a year. He was enthusiastically received in England, by Lansdowne and Fox, and also by Edmund Burke, whose speech "On Reconciliation with America" in 1775 had gained for him the reputation of America's greatest English friend. Paine lived at Burke's house for a while on a basis of great intimacy and "it was

natural," says Paine in the preface to Part I of *The Rights of Man*, "that I should consider him a friend to mankind." Meantime events were moving very swiftly across the channel. Paine spent four months in France at the invitation of Lafayette and Condorcet, giving advice on the formation of a constitution. He was in full agreement with the trend of things in France, and he wrote to Burke from Paris early in 1790 "to inform him how prosperously matters were going on." Burke's arraignment of France in his parliamentary speech on February 9, 1790, came as a terrible shock to Paine. Up to this time he had had not the slightest doubt that Burke would sympathize with the events abroad. "Soon after this," he says, also in the preface to Part I, "I saw his advertisement of the pamphlet he intended to publish" and "I promised some of the friends of the revolution in that country that whenever Mr. Burke's pamphlet came forth, I would answer it." Burke's *Reflections* appeared on November 1, 1790. Paine immediately set to work to write his reply. He was living in England at the time and probably remained during the whole period in which he wrote Part I of *The Rights of Man*. He had the pamphlet ready for the opening of Parliament in February, 1791, and it was published by his friend, Johnson. This publisher, however, became frightened after only a few copies were issued (one of which still remains in the British Museum). Paine then left for France, probably sometime in February or March, 1791, and entrusted the pamphlet to a committee of his friends—William Godwin, Thomas Holcroft, and Thomas Hollis. From Paris he sent the important biographical preface to the English edition, and the work was published by J. S. Jordan on March 13, 1791. The pamphlet was sold at the same price as Burke's *Reflections*, three shillings, and had a wide circulation. Paine gave the large income from the sale to the support of the Constitutional Societies in England. After going to France, Paine had the pamphlet translated into French by F. Soules. It was published in Paris in May, 1791, with a separate French preface. Neither the English preface in Jordan's edition nor the French preface was reprinted in the early American editions.

Paine returned to England on July 13, 1791. Burke's *Reflections* had alienated him for a time from his party. And in Part I of his pamphlet, Paine had insinuated that Burke was a secret pensioner of the crown. These circumstances drew from Burke, shortly after Paine's return to England, his pamphlet, *An Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs*. In it he tried to reply to Paine and justify his break with the whigs on the Revolution. About this time, or shortly after, Paine began work on Part II of *The Rights of Man*. In Part I, Paine can be said to have two formal aims—to defend the Revolution against Burke and to outline his principles of government. It was most directly aimed, however, at replying to Burke. This is not true

of Part II. Paine tells us in the preface that he had been waiting to reply to the comparison of the "English and French Constitutions" which Burke said he intended to make. Burke never made the comparison. Hence Part II of *Rights of Man* is mainly an exposition of Paine's principles of government rather than a reply to Burke. It should be noticed also that Part I is simply inscribed "an answer to Mr. Burke's attack on the French Revolution" whereas Part II bears the inscription, "combining principles and practice." Part II was published on February 17, 1792. The whole work, Parts I and II, were translated into French in the same year by Paine's friend, Lanthénas; and into German by C. F. Krämer (1792-93).

From the time of the appearance of Part I, the pamphlet only added more fuel to the political fires which were already burning furiously in England. With Burke's pamphlet, it served to divide England into two hostile camps, one for the Revolution, the other against. In the preface to Part II, Paine says that "eight or ten pamphlets intended as answers to the former part," published less than a year previously, had appeared. In the meantime Paine had become more and more radical in his statements after the appearance of Part I. Before returning to England, Paine and Achille Duchâtelet placarded Paris, July 1, 1791, with their *Republican Proclamation* (*Writings*, III, 1-3). In the same month Paine published in *Le Républicain* his attack on the monarchy. Abbé Siéyès, who had written a constitution in which the monarchy was given a place, wrote a reply to Paine's letter. Paine then expanded his attack on the monarchy by replying to the Abbé in the *Moniteur*. After his return to England he issued his *Address and Declaration of the Friends of Universal Peace and Liberty* on August 20, 1791, in which he defended the revolution to England and urged the French king to take the side of the republicans. Paine was continually associated with the radical Revolutionary Societies in London, and about this time made his famous toast to "The Revolution of the World." By this time his reputation began to suffer. George Chalmers, writing under the pseudonym "Oldys," published his *Life of Paine* in September, 1791. It brought to public attention a great deal of early scandal about Paine, and alienated even many of his republican friends.

In the meantime events were taking a more serious turn in France. Lafayette resigned the command of the National Guard on October 8. A month later the first decree against the émigrés was issued. On February 9, 1792, their property was confiscated. A week later Paine published Part II of *The Rights of Man* in which he renewed his attack on the monarchy and aristocracy. The English ruling classes drew the obvious parallel between the intentions of Paine and the French radicals, for *Rights of Man* was first and foremost an attack on

England, taking the American and French revolutions as object lessons. On May 14, 1792, the government took action against Paine's publisher, Jordan. One week later the government issued its decree against seditious writings and ordered Paine to appear at the Court of King's Bench on June 8. Two days before his appearance in court Paine issued his letter *To Mr. Secretary Dundas* attacking the English monarchical system by contrasting its great cost with the cheapness of republican government in the United States. Paine came up for trial on June 8, but the trial was postponed until December. Paine now issued his two letters to Lord Onslow (who presided at his hearing), in which he further expounded his ideas. In the meantime affairs had taken a very serious turn indeed in France. The Parisian mobs invaded the Tuileries on July 20, and on August 10 it was invaded again, the Swiss guards murdered, and the King made prisoner. Ten days later Lafayette was forced to flee. Six days after his flight, French citizenship was conferred on Paine by the French assembly. On September 2 the massacres in the prisons took place in Paris. On September 6 Paine was elected to the National Assembly by Calais with three other departments competing. At a meeting of the "Friends of Liberty" on the evening of September 12, Paine, still in England, made a violent speech. The next day the poet Blake, according to one of his biographers, advised Paine to flee at once. Paine went to Dover, and by using a letter from Washington as a subterfuge, succeeded in getting by the customs officials and out to sea, twenty minutes before the authorities arrived to arrest him. On December 18 his *Rights of Man* was prosecuted in England. (On the English-French background of Paine's activities during this period, see entries in the Bibliography for P. A. Brown, Laprade, Cestre, Dowden, Hancock, W. T. Hall, and Birley.)

In his first *Letter to the Citizens of the United States* on November 15, 1802, Paine says that the principles of *The Rights of Man* "were the same as those in *Common Sense*, and the effects would have been the same in England as that had produced in America, could the vote of the nation been quietly taken, or had equal opportunities of consulting or acting existed. The only difference between the two works was, that the one was adapted to the local circumstances of England, and the other to those of America" (*Writings*, III, 382). In his *Letter Addressed to the Addressers on the Late Proclamation* (the edict against seditious writings, May 21, 1792), a copy of which was taken from his papers by the customs officer at Dover at the time of his flight on September 13, Paine outlines the reasons why *Rights of Man* was prosecuted in England. The First Part, he says "detected errors," but it "did not produce a regular system of principles in the room of those which it displaced." Hence the government party

"beheld it as an unexpected gale that would soon blow over," and their attitude "was profound silence." When the Second Part based on principles appeared, they sought to pursue the same policy, but this time their silence had no "influence in stifling the progress of the work." Then, says Paine, they "affected to treat it with clamorous contempt." "The Speech-making Placemen and Pensioners, and Place-expectants, in both Houses of Parliament, the *Ouls* as well as the *Ins*," attacked the Second Part as "a silly, insignificant performance" (*Writings*, III, 47). The reason for the prosecution of *Rights of Man* was, then, because the work favored applying to the aid of the poor the "redundant taxes" being used to support the mass of "idle and profligate Placemen and Pensioners" (*Writings*, III, 56). Furthermore, the constitution, which itself is unwritten and therefore can be taken to mean anything, supports the Rotten Borough system from which the pensioners came, and as a result is bad "for at least ninety-nine parts of the nation out of a hundred" (*Writings*, III, 60). The pensioners in turn uphold the constitution which upholds them. For that reason, says Paine, the English government is a "farrago of imposition and absurdity" having as its two ruling ideas, a hereditary ruling class supported by heavy taxes (*Writings*, III, 62). In contrast to this, *Rights of Man* advocates a representative system of government.

Paine says his pamphlets were not prosecuted until they began to come into the hands of the people, because their principles were incontrovertible. When *Rights of Man* was first printed in an expensive edition, the government paid no attention. Later it was put forth at cost in April, 1791. From "that moment," says Paine, "and not before, I expected a prosecution, and the event has proved that I was not mistaken" (*Writings*, III, 65).

In America the pamphlets aroused almost as great a controversy. Part I was first published by S. H. Smith in Philadelphia in 1791, and immediately went through two editions. Shortly after it was published in Boston by Thomas and went through two editions there in 1791. Part II attained even a wider circulation. It was published in Boston by Thomas, in Philadelphia by Rice and S. H. Smith (in two editions), in New York by Gaine, and in Albany by Webster, all in the year 1792. Parts I and II were also published together very early—in Albany by Webster (four editions in 1792), in New York by Berry and Rogers (1792-93), and in Boston by Fleet (1793). The circumstances surrounding the publication of S. H. Smith's Philadelphia edition, however, caused most of the controversy in America.

Jefferson wrote President Washington his version of the circumstances surrounding the American publication of *Rights of Man* on May 8, 1791, as follows: "Paine's answer to Burke's pamphlet begins

to produce some squibs in our public papers. In Fenno's paper they are Burkites, in the others, Painites. One of Fenno's was evidently from the author of the discourses on Davila. I am afraid the indiscretion of a printer has committed me with my friend, Mr. Adams, for whom, as one of the most honest and disinterested men alive, I have a cordial esteem, increased by long habits of concurrence in opinion in the days of his republicanism; and even since his apostasy to hereditary monarchy and nobility [there is hardly any evidence for Jefferson's charge here—see Dunbar in Bibliography], though we differ, we differ as friends do. [John] Beckley [clerk of the House of Representatives] had the only copy of Paine's pamphlet, and lent it to me, desiring when I should have read it, that I would send it to a Mr. J. B. Smith, who had asked for it for his brother to reprint it. Being an utter stranger to J. B. Smith, both by sight and character, I wrote a note to explain to him why I (a stranger to him) sent him a pamphlet, to wit, that Mr. Beckley desired it; and to take off a little of the dryness of the note, I added that I was glad to find that it was to be reprinted, that something would, at length, be publicly said against the political heresies which had lately sprung up amongst us, and that I did not doubt our citizens would rally again round the standard of common sense. That I had in my view the discourses on Davila [by John Adams], which have filled Fenno's papers for a twelvemonth without contradiction, is certain, but nothing was ever further from my thoughts than to become myself the contradictor before the public. To my great astonishment, however, when the pamphlet came out, the printer had prefixed my note to it, without having given me the most distant hint of it. Mr. Adams will unquestionably take to himself the charge of political heresy, as conscious of his own views of drawing the present government to the form of the English constitution, and, I fear, will consider me as meaning to injure him in the public eye. I learn that some Anglo-men have censured it from another point of view, as a sanction of Paine's principles tends to give offense to the British government. Their real fear, however, is that this popular and republican pamphlet, taking wonderfully, is likely at a single stroke to wipe out all the unconstitutional doctrines which their bellwether Davila has been preaching for a twelvemonth. I certainly never made a secret of my being anti-monarchical, and anti-aristocratical; but I am sincerely mortified to be thus brought forward on the public stage, where to remain, to advance or to retire, will be equally against my love of silence and quiet, and my abhorrence of dispute" (Jefferson's *Writings*, Monticello Edition, VIII, 193-194). The difficulty, of course, was accentuated by the fact that the publisher, Smith, had attributed Jefferson's remarks on the "political heresies" (referring to Adams as Vice President) to Jefferson in his official capacity as

"Secretary of State." Jefferson wrote John Adams in similar vein July 17, 1791 (Adams's *Works*, VIII, 504-505), concluding that "nothing was further from my intention or expectation than to have had either my own name or your name brought before the public on this occasion."

The most incisive American attack on Paine's *Rights of Man* appeared in *The Columbian Centinel* in eleven letters from June 8 to July 27, 1791, signed by "Publicola." Jefferson imagined that these were by John Adams himself, but they were really by his twenty-four-year-old son, John Quincy Adams. (They are reprinted in the latter's *Writings*, ed. W. C. Ford, I, 65-110. On other newspaper attacks and defenses see *ibid.*, pp. 65-66, note.) On July 10, 1791, Jefferson wrote Monroe, "A writer, under the name of Publicola in attacking all Paine's principles, is very desirous of involving me in the same censure with the author. I certainly merit the same, for *I profess the same principles . . .*" (Jefferson's *Writings*, Monticello Edition, VIII, 207, italics mine; see also *ibid.*, X, 223.) This definite acknowledgment that Jefferson accepted Paine's radical French revolutionary principles is significant, in view of the attempts of later interpreters to make Jefferson appear much more conservative.

#### THE AGE OF REASON (pp. 234-335)

The text of *The Age of Reason* here reprinted follows that of the first edition printed by Barrois in Paris in 1794.

While the popular view of Paine has doubtless been that of Theodore Roosevelt who denounced him as "a filthy little atheist," it appears from Paine's second paragraph, which should be read with current events in France in mind, that although he did attack Christianity his fundamental aim was constructively religious. He wrote *The Age of Reason* especially for the French people, "lest, in the general wreck of superstition, of false systems of government, and false theology, we lose sight of morality, of humanity, and of the theology that is true." He hoped to get his readers to agree upon the broad basic simple principles which he supposed all religions in all times and lands had in common. "It is certain," he concluded in Part I, "that, in one point, all nations of the earth and all religions agree. All believe in a God. The things in which they disagree are the redundancies annexed to that belief; and therefore, if ever an universal religion should prevail, it will not be [by] believing anything new, but in getting rid of redundancies, and believing as man believed at first." The need for such constructive argument will be apparent if one recalls that the French clergy had condemned themselves before the masses as plotters against the Revolution. The French Convention had abolished the Christian Sabbath in October, 1793,

substituting their revolutionary calendar. In November the Goddess of Reason had been enshrined in the cathedral of Notre Dame. Shortly after, the radical Jacobins led by Hébert, Chaumette, and Cloutz closed all the churches. Desjardin is witness that even a form of paganism, developing fetish-worship of *La Patrie*, Liberty, and Reason with full ritual, was springing up "as a result of the maxims of the Terror." (Wheeler, I, 255-57. For full details see A. Aulard's *Christianity and the French Revolution*, London, 1927; R. R. Palmer's *Catholics and Unbelievers in Eighteenth Century France*, Princeton, 1939; and K. N. McKee, *The Rôle of the Priest on the Parisian Stage during the French Revolution*, Johns Hopkins Studies in Romance Literatures, XXXVI, 1939.)

Though *The Age of Reason* did not appear in its final form until 1794-6, Paine, as he says in the opening line, had intended to publish his "thoughts upon Religion" "for several years past." As far back as *Common Sense* in 1776, he says that he "saw the exceeding probability that a revolution in the system of government would be followed by a revolution in the system of religion" (*Writings*, IV, 22). In the same year he remarked to both Samuel and John Adams that it had long been his intention to publish his thoughts on religion (*Writings*, IV, 4). In the *Crisis*, No. VII, 1778, he first used the phrase, "Religion of Humanity." He made further references to the question of religion in *The Rights of Man* (*Writings*, II, 326 ff.). But it was not until circumstances in France reached a climax that Paine actually brought out *The Age of Reason*. In a letter to Samuel Adams, January 1, 1803 (*Writings*, IV, 205), he informs Adams why he wrote the work when he did. "In the first place, I saw my life in continual danger. My friends were falling as fast as the guillotine could cut their heads off, and as I every day expected the same fate, I resolved to begin my Work." "In the second place, the people of France were running headlong into Atheism, and I had the work translated and published in their own language to stop them in that career, and fix them to the first article . . . of every man's Creed who has any Creed at all, *I believe in God*."

Details of the publication of *The Age of Reason* are not clear. Paine tells us in the preface to the Second Part that he finished the First Part near the close of the year 1793 just before his imprisonment. "I had not finished it more than six hours, in the state it has since appeared, before a guard came about three in the morning, with an order signed by the two Committees of Public Safety and Surety General, for putting me under arrest."

This, however, was not the first *Age of Reason*. Early in 1793 Paine brought to his colleague, Lanthénas, a manuscript on religion. Lanthénas translated it into French and had it printed. He showed the essay to Couthon, who with Robespierre, had charge of religious

matters. Couthon frowned on the work and it was apparently suppressed. The fact of this earlier work is found in a letter from Lanthénas to Merlin de Thionville (*Writings*, IV, 1). Apparently after it was suppressed Paine set to work and re-wrote the book anew. This is the work which he delivered into Barlow's hands on his way to prison, December 28, 1793, and which was published in English by Barrois in 1794. Lanthénas delivered to Merlin de Thionville on August 7, 1794, a copy which he had translated into French, from which the first French edition was published. Conway believes that this is the same work which Paine is supposed to have written earlier, but there seems little proof for this, since the French and English editions have only a few minor textual differences. Paine was released from prison, November 4, 1794, through the solicitations of Monroe who succeeded Gouverneur Morris as ambassador to France. He went to live with the Monroes after his release, and it was during his sojourn there that he wrote Part II. The combined work, Parts I and II, were first published by H. D. Symonds on October 25, 1795, in London. A cheap pirated edition by the printer Eaton appeared on January 1, 1796. The other editions of Parts I and II appeared in London in that year. The editions of Part I are as follows: five in Paris in 1794; one in Boston, one in New York, and one in Worcester in 1794; and another in New York, marked "The Seventh American Edition" in 1795. Of Part II three editions appeared in London in 1795, and one in 1796. Washburne (see Bibliography) says 16,000 copies of *The Age of Reason* were sold in England during its first year, and shortly after that the London Club distributed 30,000 cheap copies. There were four editions in Ireland, the second being 10,000 copies. As late as 1820 Carlile testifies that during the three years before he had sold 5000 copies. Paine (*Works*, IV, 15) says he sent Franklin's grandson, Franklin Bache, in America, "about fifteen thousand of the second part of the *Age of Reason*," which he had printed in Paris in 1795; they arrived in April, 1796, "but he had advertised it long before." The Calvinistic Federalists, led by Rev. Timothy Dwight and Rev. Jedediah Morse, tried to convince people that French atheists and anarchists were using Paine's work to undermine America's morality.

*The Age of Reason* immediately raised a storm of protest which continued for several years. There were many replies made to it in America alone (the longest of which is the Rev. Uzal Ogden's *Antidote to Deism. The Deist Unmasked; or An Ample Refutation of all the Objections of Thomas Paine*, Newark, 1795, 2 vols.). A list of sixteen American pamphlets and books on *The Age of Reason* will be found in V. Stauffer's "New England and the Bavarian Illuminati," *Columbia Studies in History, Economics, etc.*, LXXXII, 75-76, New

York, 1918. And a long list of contemporary newspaper attacks will be found in A. E. Morse, *The Federalist Party in Massachusetts to the year 1800* (Princeton, 1909), pp. 217-219. The most important English replies were those by Dr. Richard Watson, Bishop of Llandaff, and the Rev. Gilbert Wakefield.

AGRARIAN JUSTICE (pp. 336-353)

This was Paine's last great pamphlet. It was written, he tells us in the English preface, in the winter of 1795-96 while he was still at the home of Monroe in Paris, shortly after the completion of the second part of *The Age of Reason*. The *raison d'être* of the pamphlet grew directly out of the *émigré* situation in France. During the course of the revolution over three hundred laws regarding *émigrés* were placed on the statute books. Chief among these laws were those relating to the confiscation of *émigré* property. Each commune prepared a list of all *émigrés* and their relatives within its borders. All persons appearing on the list were subject to the *émigré* laws. The lists themselves grew and multiplied until nearly every man of property was included, and vast interests were involved who wished to see the *émigré* laws maintained. Late in 1795, however, the Directory assigned to a committee of the Corps Législatif the job of removing *émigrés* from the lists. The problem was widely discussed in the Parisian clubs, both Right and Left, and the work of the committee was interrupted for a time by uprisings from each group. In February, 1796, the Directory closed a number of clubs. Those affected were chiefly royalist, but also included was the radical Panthéon. Within this club was the extremist *Société des Égaux*, led by the radical Babeuf who believed the first revolution had failed because the rich were still allowed to possess property. His faction was the most ardent champion of the so-called Agrarian Law—a widespread but vague plan advocated by many revolutionary groups for dividing up the land. To achieve this end Babeuf believed a second revolution was necessary and began a secret conspiracy to achieve it. His conspiracy was discovered and crushed in May, 1796. In January, 1797, a royalist conspiracy was also discovered and suppressed. As a result of these disturbances, the Directory and the Corps Législatif did not get around to the problem of *émigré* property until the summer of 1797. It was at this turn of affairs that Paine decided to publish his pamphlet in French under the title: *Thomas Payne à la Législature et au Directoire. Ou la Justice Agraire opposée à la Loi Agraire, et aux privilèges agraires*. Later in the same year, it was published in London with the English title: *Agrarian Justice opposed to Agrarian Law, and to Agrarian Monopoly*.

The title shows the moderate nature of the pamphlet. Paine was

steering a path midway between the communist "Agrarian Law" of Babeuf and the "Agrarian Monopoly" of a hereditary aristocracy. He opposed Babeuf's interference with established property rights, but at the same time he wanted to aid the unpropertied classes. He maintained that the fault was "not in the present possessors." He divided all property into land (natural property) and cultivated property. All men have a share in the land, but only the possessor has a right to property which he added to the land. Hence Paine claimed that nothing "could be more unjust" than Babeuf's "Agrarian Law in a country improved by cultivation." Babeuf would have divided both kinds equally among the people. (For full details of Babeuf's conspiracy see E. B. Bax, *The Last Episode of the French Revolution*, London, 1911.) For that reason Paine claimed his own plan of taxing only natural property was true "agrarian justice." He says he is "equally" interested "in the hard case of those thrown out of their natural inheritance" and "the right of the possessor to the part which is his." (Paine's idol, Brissot, had also opposed an anarchic division of the land. See *Patriote Français*, Dec. 28, 1792.) The moderation of Paine's proposal was violently attacked by Thomas Spence, the English agrarian, in his pamphlet *The Rights of Infants, with Scriptures on Paine's Agrarian Justice* (1797). "The poor beggarly stipends which [Paine] would have us accept in lieu of our lordly and just pretensions to the soil of our birth," says Spence, "are so contemptible and insulting that I shall leave them to the scorn of every person conscious of the dignity of his nature."

The need for a more equitable distribution of wealth was widely recognized, especially in France, long before the appearance of Paine's pamphlet. Mirabeau, Malouet, Vergniaud, Brissot, Condorcet, and Rousseau, all spoke of it, and many advocated a progressive income tax as the solution. In 1793 Boissel was insisting to the Jacobins that "the fruits of the earth belong to the poor by natural right." Abbé Fauchet in his journal, the *Bouche de Fer*, preached the original goodness of man and his right to an equal share of the earth. In England as early as 1775 Thomas Spence delivered a lecture on land reform. This was republished in 1793 under the title *The Real Rights of Man*. Spence's ideas were far more radical than Paine's. Where Paine advocated only a tax on land, Spence advocated the equal distribution of *all* property, land and improvements alike. It is plain, he says, that the land in any country, "with everything in or on the same, . . . belongs at all times to the living inhabitants of the said country . . . in an equal manner." In 1782 William Ogilvie published *An Essay on the Right of Property in Land with respect to its Foundation in the Law of Nature*, claiming that "each individual seems to have by nature a right to possess and cultivate an equal share." Like Paine, both Spence and Ogilvie pro-

pose a tax on land. In America, too, Paine had forbears. Franklin took a more radical position than Paine. The latter put no restrictions on either the right of property or the amount one could possess. Franklin restricted both: "All property that is necessary to a man, for the conservation of the individual and the propagation of the species, is his natural right" and "all property superfluous to such purposes is the property of the public, and therefore rightfully taxed" (Franklin's *Writings*, ed. Smyth, IX, 138). As early as 1785 Jefferson expressed all the basic ideas found in *Agrarian Justice*. The earth, he says, is "given as a common stock for men to labor and live on." If the land is appropriated, care must be taken to provide other employment for those dispossessed. And unless this is done, "the fundamental right to labor the earth returns to the unemployed" (Jefferson's *Writings*, Monticello Edition, VIII, 196). Paine's friend, Barlow, also expressed ideas on land distribution closely paralleling those in *Agrarian Justice*; in return for one's right to land, Barlow argued that the state should provide each man with an education. See Bibliography under J. M. Davidson; also Samuel Milliken, *Forerunners of Henry George*, and M. Beer, *Pioneers of Land Reform* (London: 1920).

Most of the advocates of land taxation before Paine, including Franklin and Jefferson, favor using the tax to build up an agrarian society. Paine has no such idea in *Agrarian Justice* (see Introduction, p. lxxviii ff.). Instead he sees the government as an agency of social welfare using the land tax to aid people who, under the rising industrial state, never expect to live on the soil. As such his pamphlet is a predecessor of later schemes varying from the Chartist Movement to Henry George's single tax theory. For Paine himself it shows that in regard to government his ideas have changed considerably. In *Common Sense* he contended that at its best government was a necessary evil and that it should be reduced to a minimum. (See also *Writings*, II, 245.) In *Agrarian Justice*, 1797, he has come almost full circle, for this foreshadows the modern humanitarian belief that government may be a beneficent agent promoting the welfare of the underprivileged: broadly speaking, Paine's works plot the curve from rugged individualism to rudimentary socialism.

#### PUBLIC GOOD (354-366)

The full title of this pamphlet, published by Dunlap of Philadelphia, December 30, 1780, was: *Public Good: Being an Examination into the Claim of Virginia to the Vacant Western Territory, and of the Right of the United States to the Same: to Which is Added Proposals for Laying off a New State, to be Applied as a Fund for Carrying on the War, or Redeeming the National Debt*. Although Congress adopted

the Articles of Confederation on November 17, 1777, and submitted them to the individual states for ratification, Maryland—having definite western limits and thus being without claim to western lands—refused to ratify the Articles unless Virginia and other states which had such claims would cede them to the federal government. In this *impasse*, caused by the rivalries between the large and the small states, Paine showed his wise statesmanship and devotion to the ideal of the Union as opposed to states' rights by investigating Virginia's claims to western lands and by urging that all such claims be ceded to the Union as a means of cementing it and of defraying the expenses of the Union. Later, in his "Letters to Rhode Island" in 1782-83, he used the same argument in attempting to persuade that state to desist from its refusal to accept the proposal of Congress that all the states should pay a five-per-cent duty on imported articles to finance the war. (See notes on *Crisis XIII* and *A Supernumerary Crisis*, p. 419.) Maryland finally ratified the Articles of Confederation in March, 1781, Virginia having ceded her claims as urged by Paine and others.

*Public Good* not only demonstrates Paine's early Unionism but also shows him a far-sighted pioneer in recognizing the need even in 1780 of a "continental convention, for the purpose of forming a continental constitution"; in the "Letters to Rhode Island" he further urged the inadequacy of the weak Articles of Confederation as well as the need of a more powerful Constitution. Alexander Hamilton is usually credited with being among the first (see his letter to James Duane, Sept. 3, 1780) to recognize the defects of the Confederation and to call for a new Constitution. It is thus interesting to note that Paine independently called for the same change in the same year that Hamilton did—seven years before the actual Federal Convention was called. For orientation see E. S. Corwin, "The Progress of Constitutional Theory between the Declaration of Independence and the Meeting of the Philadelphia Convention," *American Historical Review*, XXX, 511-536 (April, 1925). It should be noted that Paine takes into account both concrete economic situations and the theoretical advantages of a coercive union.

For the very complicated history of the controversy over claims to western lands see the excellent discussions by Merrill Jensen in *The Articles of Confederation* (Madison, Wis., 1940), by T. P. Abernethy in *Western Lands and the American Revolution* (New York, 1937), and in the numerous studies by other scholars which they cite. Paine may have been paid for writing this pamphlet, but its argument for unionism is common to his earlier and later writings and surely one that be believed in sincerely; as Conway (*Life*, I, 165) points out, Paine's principle that the western lands belong to the Confederation would have been "as fatal to the claim of a [land] Company as to that of a State."

LETTER ADDRESSED TO THE ADDRESSERS ON THE  
LATE PROCLAMATION (367-386)

Britain had issued a Royal Proclamation against seditious writings on May 21, 1792, and on June 8 Paine had been charged with sedition and his trial was appointed for December 18. However, on September 13, having been elected to represent Calais in the French Convention, Paine escaped to France. Since Paine said that the customs officer at Dover seized "a printed proof copy of my Letter to the Addressers, which will soon be published" (*Writings*, III, 44), the pamphlet had apparently been written in England during the summer of 1792. It illustrates Paine's power of taunting irony, but it is chiefly significant as a weather vane in the history of British reform. While the great majority of the British liberals had merely advocated reform within the existing framework of the limited monarchy, calling for changes such as the annual election of Parliament, etc., Paine in this pamphlet demanded decisively and unequivocally that the British people disregard the existing government and imitate the course of the French Revolution which so many feared: he demanded that the people themselves call a national convention for the purpose of framing a republican constitution and a completely new government. (He imagined that this could be done without bloodshed.) If, as Professor W. T. Laprade thinks, the Pitt government was trying to prove that serious sedition was being advocated so that the government could excite the people and keep them loyal to the monarchy as threatened by the excesses witnessed in France, Paine's *Letter Addressed to the Addressers* played into the government's hands by furnishing positive proof that at least one reformer was actually trying to overthrow the existing government.

Obviously, Britain kept her monarchy, and Paine overshot the mark: many of his earlier supporters among the reformers recoiled from him. Representative of these was the widely respected Christopher Wyvill (*Political Papers* [1794 ff.], III, Part II, 67-71; IV, 74-80; V, 58-67). He had originally regarded Burke as "far more pernicious" than Paine, and favored reform. But now he distinguished carefully (in his *Defense of Dr. Price*) between the moderate reforming Whigs and the republican followers of Paine. Wyvill concluded sorrowfully, "The French Revolution has frightened some weak minds: Mr. Paine's works others: and the late events in France have intimidated many. However despicable such feelings may be, abstractedly considered, yet, when they are pretty general, they must be treated with some respect. I am clear that no attempt at present for a Parliamentary Reform can produce any good; but, on the contrary, show weakness in the end" (*op. cit.*, V, Letter II, p. 80).

During this period Paine's effigy was burned from one end of Eng-

land to the other, and a reaction set in against ideas of reform. However, his trial (from which he was of course absent) led to Erskine's eloquent defense of the constitutional rights of free thought and speech in England; and it is possible that after the hysteria had quieted down the triumph of the Reform Bill in 1832, although far from instituting the republicanism Paine desired, was not without debt to his efforts at adult education in political liberalism. For further discussion see Conway's *Life*, I, 367 ff; and consult the Bibliography under Laprade, Brown, Birley, Hall, Brinton.

#### LETTER TO GEORGE WASHINGTON (387-408)

If Paine's ideas were too radical for British acceptance, they were too conservative for the French after he heroically pleaded, almost alone, that the life of Louis XVI be spared. (See *Writings*, III, 114-127.) The Robespierre government, which had supplanted that of Paine's milder Girondist friends, kept him in the Luxembourg prison from December 28, 1793, until November 4, 1794. He lived in daily expectation of being guillotined, and it is probable that he was saved only by the mistake of a guard in marking his door. The French officials claimed that he was an Englishman, not an American citizen, and that the United States government had not authorized his release. For the complex details involving his appeals to his former opponent, Gouverneur Morris (then our minister in Paris), Washington's silence, and Paine's eventual release through the aid of James Monroe who finally took Morris's place, see Conway's *Life*, II, 165-180. This situation, then, explains his bitterness toward Washington: Paine's mind had been demoralized by physical suffering (in prison he nearly died because of an ulcer in his side, and even ten months after his release Monroe, who nursed Paine at his home, did not expect him to live), and he naturally brooded over what he interpreted to be Washington's ingratitude and that of the American people whose independence he had helped to secure. It should be remembered that, especially in the fifth *Crisis*, Paine had made a powerful defense of Washington when he was in danger of losing his command.

It will be noted that Paine as a pro-French anti-Federalist tries to counterbalance the "impudent or rash" conduct of Genêt (whose appointment as France's American representative he had encouraged) by the equally unwise conduct of Gouverneur Morris, America's representative in France. But he is of course especially critical of the Federalist John Jay's treaty with England (1795) as providing our old enemy "with naval stores and other articles of American produce," and as being a "counter-treaty" showing our ingratitude for French aid in our Revolution. For orientation regarding the Jay, Morris, and Genêt matters, see S. F. Bemis, *The Diplomacy of the American*

*Revolution* (New York: 1935); Frank Monaghan, *John Jay, Defender of Liberty* (New York: 1935); Maude H. Woodfin, *Citizen Genet and His Mission* (University of Chicago dissertation, 1928). For the history of the liberals' opposition to the Federalists, see E. P. Link, *Democratic-Republican Societies, 1790-1800* (New York, 1942), and the studies listed in Link's bibliography, pp. 213-242. For the part which religious issues played in the political conflict, see studies by A. E. Morse, Vernon Stauffer, G. A. Koch, and H. M. Morais.

If Paine's letter was violent, the Federalists tried to persuade the American people that it was only part of a complex plot whose violence their propaganda exaggerated so much that their efforts "back-fired." Led by Calvinists such as the Rev. Timothy Dwight, President of Yale, and the Rev. Jedediah Morse, they tried to persuade people that the French were atheists and anarchists who were using Paine as a kind of "Fifth Columnist" in a preconceived plan to overthrow our government. (See Morse's "Sermon preached at Charlestown, November 29, 1798, on the Anniversary Thanksgiving in Massachusetts. With an appendix, designed to illustrate some parts of the Discourse; exhibiting proofs of the early existence, progress, and deleterious effects of French intrigue and influence in the United States." Boston, 1799. Also see H. M. Jones, *America and French Culture*. Chapel Hill, 1927.) Had not Paine championed the French Revolution which murdered King Louis XVI? (Actually, Paine risked his own life trying to save the King's.) Had not Paine's *Address to the Addressers* tried to start a bloody revolution in England? (Actually, he suggested a national convention similar to our constitutional convention.) Had not his *Age of Reason* been broadcast to undermine all Christian morality in America? (Actually, Paine wrote it, as we know, to recall the French to a basic belief in the deity and morality when these were threatened by excesses he opposed.) Even Washington's *Farewell Address* (published in *Claypoole's American Daily Advertiser* forty-nine days after Paine dated the present letter to him) had warned his countrymen against those who would "subvert" religion and morality which were "the firmest props of the duties of men and citizens," and against those who by party spirit were undermining our Union. (Actually, as we know, Paine was as ardent as Washington himself in urging the vital need of union.) Had not Paine urged the appointment of Genêt, who sought to turn Americans against their President? (Actually, Paine admitted Genêt was impudent and rash, and that his conduct was only equalled by that of Gouverneur Morris, whom Paine despised.) And had not this impious *Letter to Washington* been written at the home of our minister to France, who was allied with the Jeffersonians? (Actually, Monroe urged Paine not to write the letter, and could not turn out a countryman who was near death and who had rendered America great services

in earlier days.) Finally, the whole thing was part of a vast and impious international plot hatched among the Bavarian Illuminati to spread atheism, anarchy, and destruction! The Calvinistic Federalists reveled in their propaganda, with Paine as the archdevil.

Then reverses set in. The Alien and Sedition Acts (curbing free speech) in 1798 generated much popular resentment. After France's so-called X Y Z episode, and her hostile treatment of our envoys (partly because of resentment against Jay's pro-British treaty), France in 1799 invited us to send new envoys, and President Adams did so. France wanted peace, and eventually sold us all Louisiana. But so far as the Illuminati charges against Paine were concerned, there had been based mainly on a lurid book by John Robison entitled *Proofs of a Conspiracy against all the Religions and Governments of Europe, carried on in Secret Meetings, Illuminati, and Reading Societies*, a fourth edition of which appeared in New York in 1798. In the midst of the uproar, the Unitarian Rev. William Bentley had sense enough to write a friend of his abroad by the name of Ebling who had an intimate knowledge of what was to be known about the "conspiracy" of the Bavarian Illuminati. On March 13, 1799, Ebling replied in a very long letter of some thirty-odd pages, providing incontestable proof, point by point, refuting Robison's charges. This letter, widely reprinted at the time, and the ensuing collapse of the whole Federalist "scare campaign" are treated in detail in the *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, N.S., XXXV, 307-334 (October, 1925). It became clear that Paine was simply a free individual who was certainly not in the pay of France and who had chosen to express his own personal religious views, opposing some creeds to be sure, but elaborating with obvious earnestness his devout belief in God, in doing good to his fellowmen as the best kind of worship, in the sanctity of men's souls, and in immortality. The Calvinist-Federalist group had overshot their mark; the people recoiled after the tension to which they had been subjected. The common people, frontiersmen, the under-privileged, and southern dissenters favoring freedom of expression, people who loved simplicity and the farmers' way of life, defeated the Federalists and elected Jefferson as President in 1800. And since Jefferson had said that Paine's principles in *The Rights of Man* were "the same" as his own, it would appear that thus Paine's principles eventually won the approval of a majority of the American people for whose rights and liberties he had striven so valiantly.